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BLACK LIVES, RED TAPE: THE ALABAMA FREEDMEN'S BUREAU

by

Kenneth B. White

In March 1865, when the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands was established in Washington D. C. supporters of racial justice were extremely hopeful. Not only was the Civil War winding down to a successful conclusion, but the Thirteenth Amendment abolishing slavery was on its way to ratification, and the federal government had seemingly committed itself to the struggle for racial adjustment in the Southern States.

The Freedmen's Bureau, as it was more familiarly known, was to be organized in the War Department with a national Commissioner and state organizations under Assistant Commissioners. It was to have complete authority in freedmen's affairs. Bureau personnel were authorized to handle justice, labor, relief, law, health, and could also set aside land for sale to freedmen and loyal refugees within the Southern States. These broad powers promising major results were seemingly only restricted by a lack of initial financial support. The latter deficiency was remedied in mid-1866 when Congress reorganized and expanded Bureau authority and appropriated $6,926,450 for its activities.[1]

Yet within a few short years these initial actions and the high hopes they engendered for racial advancement had been dashed. The Freedmen's Bureau had disappeared and with it congressional support for land distribution, education, relief, labor, and equal justice for southern blacks. Why did the promising program, so dramatic in its inception, disappear so quickly and fail so utterly? Numerous explanations and critiques have been offered over the years. For some scholars Andrew Johnson has loomed large as the villain. Other historians have seen weaknesses in the local and national leadership of the Bureau. The failure of a true national commitment

[1]*U. S. Statutes-at-Large,* XIII, 507-09; XIV, 91-2, 176-77.

to racial reform, some have argued, meant ultimate failure. All these explanations have validity. Yet, in all the assessments of the Bureau from the early writings of Paul Peirce and W. E. Burghardt DuBois through the more contemporary views of George Bentley, John and LaWanda Cox, and William S. McFeely one major limitation has been consistently overlooked, one problem which above all others precluded the likelihood of success: bureaucratic mismanagement. The most debilitating aspect of Bureau operations was the incredible bureaucracy and red tape which strangled the efficiency of the organization.[2]

In Alabama the situation was strikingly clear. From the earliest days until it ceased operations in July 1870, the Alabama Bureau was stymied by delays, indecision, administrative shuffling, manpower problems, and strangling paperwork. The appointment of Wager Swayne, the enduring Assistant Commissioner who served from July 1865 to January 1868, exemplified some of these problems. Major General Swayne was appointed head of the Alabama agency in June 1865, after the initial designee was unable to fill the position. Because of various delays Swayne did not arrive in Montgomery until late July. Upon arrival the General found the Bureau in limbo. Administration of the State had been divided between the Assistant Commissioners of Louisiana and Tennessee. While Tennessee's General Clinton Fisk had been moderately active

[2]Hans L. Trefousse, *Impeachment of a President: Andrew Johnson, the Blacks, and Reconstruction* (Knoxville,1975), 12-14, 29, 115-20; J. Thomas May, "The Freedmen's Bureau at the Local Level: A Study of a Louisiana Agent," *Louisiana History,* IX (1968), 5-19; William S. McFeely, *Yankee Stepfather: General O. O. Howard and the Freedmen* (New Haven, 1968), 304-28; Martin Abbott, *The Freedmen's Bureau in South Carolina, 1865-1872* (Chapel Hill, 1967), vii-viii; Kenneth B. White, "Relief, Labor and Education: Some Aspects of the Alabama Freedmen's Bureau, 1865-1870," (unpublished M. A. Thesis, Florida State University, 1969), 124; Kenneth M. Stampp, *The Era of Reconstruction, 1865-1877* (New York, 1965), 131-35; Paul S. Peirce, *The Freedmen's Bureau; A Chapter in the History of Reconstruction* (Iowa City, 1904), 150-60; George R. Bentley, *A History of the Freedmen's Bureau* (Philadelphia, 1955), 72-3, 136-39, 214; W. E. Burghardt DuBois, "The Freedmen's Bureau," *Atlantic Monthly,* LXXXVII (March, 1901), 354-65; John and LaWanda Cox, "General O. O. Howard and the 'Misrepresenter Bureau,'" *The Journal of Southern History,* XIX (November, 1953), 427-56; LaWanda Cox, "The Promise of Land for the Freedmen," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review,* XLV (1958), 413-40. The only published study of the Alabama Bureau is Elizabeth Bethel, "The Freedmen's Bureau in Alabama," *The Journal of Southern History,* XIV (February, 1948), 49-92.

in Northern Alabama, Thomas Conway, the Louisiana Assistant Commissioner, had largely ignored his section of the state. Conway informed Swayne that he had not wanted to build another man's foundation Disjointed and reluctant administration only made Swayne's job more difficult as time was essential to success.[3]

Despite early delays, the Assistant Commissioner quickly took hold and sought to complete his organizational structure and institute policies in the many areas of freedmen's affairs. Unfortunately, this was more difficult than expected. A limited number of officers were available to fill key positions both in the Montgomery headquarters and in the local agencies throughout the State. Several months elapsed before the staff was stabilized under Swayne. Even the selection of a Superintendent of Education was delayed because Swayne was unaware of any provision for such a position. When he finally realized that the post was available, having read of it in a speech given by Commissioner Oliver Otis Howard, Swayne wrote to request a Superintendent for Alabama. At the end of the year the position was still unfilled as the General was awaiting an answer from his first choice.[4]

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[3]United States House. ..*Executive Document No. 11,* "Message From the President of the United States Transmitting Report of the Commissioner of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands," 39th Cong., 1st Sess., 27; Thomas McAdroy Owen, *History of Alabama and Dictionary of Alabama Biography* Chicago, 1921), IV, 1639; *Dictionary of American Biography* (New York, 1936), XVIII, 240-41; Wager Swayne Military Records, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1780's-1917, Record Group 94, National Archives, Washington, D. C.; General Wager Swayne to Major General O. O. Howard, July 24, 31, 1865, Letters Sent by the Assistant Commissioner, hereinafter cited as Letters Sent. Records of the Alabama Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands, Record Group 105, National Archives, hereinafter cited as BRFAL, Ala.; B. Gen. Clinton B. Fisk to Brig. Gen. Swayne, October 7, 10, 1865, Letters Received by the Assistant Commissioner, hereinafter cited as Letters Received, BRFAL, Ala. Fisk administered Alabama above the 34th parallel until ordered to relinquish control on October 10, 1865. Eric L. McKitrick, *Andrew Johnson and Reconstruction* (Chicago, 1960), 28-41; William S. McFeely, "Unfinished Business: The Freedmen's Bureau and Federal Action in Race Relations," in Nathan I. Huggins, Martin Kilson, and Daniel M. Fox, *Key Issues in the Afro-American Experience,* vol. II (New York, 1971), 22. McKitrick and McFeely recognized that the period immediately following victory until approximately December 1865, held the greatest promise for a successful peace built on racial adjustment in the South. As time passed, those chances diminished proportionately.

[4]Brig. Gen. Wager Swayne to Maj. Gen. O. O. Howard, September 11, August 28, 1865, January 31, 1866, Letters Sent, BRFAL, Ala.

At the local level the Bureau advanced at an equally dilatory pace. With no appropriation, Swayne was forced to rely on military personnel or civil magistrates as agents under specific Bureau mandate. In the fall of 1865 the General urged the deployment of additional military personnel in Alabama to allow for the extension of Bureau agencies. Failing in this, Swayne began to pursue the utilization of citizen agents at Commissioner Howard's suggestion. By the end of the year sub-districts had been established in Demopolis, Greenville, Huntsville, Mobile, Montgomery, Selma, and Tuskegee. However, at the time of Swayne's annual report in October 1866, the Tuskegee station had been abandoned and new facilities created at Tuscaloosa and Talladega. From that point until the general removal of services at the end of 1868, stations or sub-districts were sporadically created and abandoned. For example, a sub-district was established in Claiborne for two months in 1868, in Elyton for three months in the same year, and in Eufaula for one and one-half years from June 1867, to January 1869. Opelika had an agency for twenty months ending in December 1868, while Newton had one for two months in 1868. Agencies were also temporarily established in Girard, Eutaw, and Greensboro.[5]

The lack of continuity in Bureau stations created serious problems in dealing with the local population. The appearance and sometimes sudden disappearance of Bureau operations was a constant source of concern particularly to the black population which the agency was to service and protect.

As if the shuffling of offices were not enough, constant shifting of personnel profoundly compounded the problem. In Opelika, for example, the headquarters there operated under four separate Sub-Assistant Commissioners during its twenty month existence. Two of these officers served a total of four months. The final officer moved from clerk to Sub-Assistant Commissioner for the remaining two and one-half months of Bureau operations in 1868. In Mobile, the Bureau

[5]Brig. Gen. Wager Swayne to Maj. Gen. O. O. Howard, September 11, 18, 1865, Letters Sent; See also Reports of Operations From the Sub-Districts, hereinafter cited as Sub-District Reports, BRFAL, Ala.; Report of the Assistant Commissioner For Alabama, 1867, Lewis E. Parsons Papers, Alabama State Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama.

operated under no fewer than eight different officers for an average of five months per administration. Demopolis and Talladega each had seven Sub-Assistant Commissioners, while Huntsville and Greenville each had six shifts in leadership. Montgomery and Selma had five and four commanders respectively.[6]

At Montgomery, the State headquarters was equally chaotic. The four separate Assistant Commissioners used seven Assistant Adjutant Generals, and five Superintendents of Education. During 1868, the last year of full Bureau activity, the Assistant Commissioners and School Superintendency changed hands four times. In personnel Lieutenant James Fell McGogy was a dramatic example of the bureaucratic wizardry of the agency. After serving initially as the Acting Assistant Quartermaster in Montgomery, the Indiana native moved on to Greenville as Assistant Superintendent. Within less than a year he was ordered to Talladega to assume command there. From there he eventually became Sub-Assistant Commissioner in Newton, a position which lasted only two months. McGogy finished his tenure with the Bureau with a five month reprise as head of the Greenville headquarters.[7]

In assessing Bureau effectiveness it is hard to minimize the impact of constant changes. If the agency was to be successful in assisting freedmen in their quest for a fair share in Alabama society, officials would have to establish themselves in local areas. Once they made their presence known they would have to effect a policy that could be enforced throughout their district. With policy established and enforcement procedures in place, their policies would need time to allow for acceptance and compliance: continuity in leadership and policy was essential. If all this could be accomplished the ultimate result would be confidence. The Bureau had to convince freedmen, undoubtedly skeptical of all whites, that its agents had their interests at heart and that ultimately those interests could be secured and protected. Without a clear policy and the power to enforce it, and, most important, the continuity that comes with consistent, effective, and enduring leadership,

[6]Rosters of Bureau Personnel, BRFAL, Ala.
[7]Rosters of Bureau Personnel, BRFAL, Ala.

blacks would never develop confidence in the Freedmen's Bureau.

Black concern was often expressed through petitions to the Bureau. Swayne received two pleas for the retention of C. W. Pierce, the Sub-Assistant Commissioner in Demopolis, one from blacks and one from local whites, who claimed that Pierce's removal would be "injurious to all." General O. L. Shepherd, the third Assistant Commissioner of 1868, was confronted with a similar request when blacks in Bluffton feared the removal of W. H. Hunter, the local agent. Their worst fears were confirmed two months later when Hunter, who had only served in the Bluffton area for four months, was transferred across the State. Even General Howard received a plea, fruitless nonetheless, from Alabama blacks when they anticipated the effects of shifting personnel.[8]

Constant turnover caused incredible confusion and a lack of continuity. Lack of funds and mustering out of troops caused problems with shifting personnel during the first year. As the years passed, however, the problem continued unabated. In 1865 agents and Superintendents wrote headquarters asking for aid. O. S. Abbott, a new Assistant Superintendent in Gainesville, did not know what to do about contracts or contract violations. "What if someone breaks a contract?" In Talladega conditions were profoundly confused. General A. L. Chetlain, the commanding officer in Talladega informed Swayne in November 1865, that Chaplain D. P. Cilley, the Assistant Superintendent, had left and no one was available to assume his duties. Chaplain T. Humphrey was appointed to fill the void but by the end of the month Humphrey was bemoaning his ineffectiveness. On the job for two weeks, and yet to hear from Swayne, he was unable to obtain necessary supplies from the Quartermaster. Frustrated and unsure as to his authority, Humphrey told Swayne, "Indeed this Bureau in this place has been carried on in a manner which was abhorrent to humanity and a burning disgrace to the country." A week later the Chaplain was still writing unanswered letters about

[8]W. B. Lane, *et al.* to Brig. Genl. W. Swayne, April 13, 1866; Lafayette Bates and Wife, *et al.* to Major General W. Swayne, April 13, 1866; Lafayette Reese, Lumpkin Reese, *et al.* to General O. L. Shepherd, June 11, 1868; Henry Fane, *et al.* to Maj. Gen. O. O. Howard, January n.d., 1868, Letters Received, BRFAL, Ala.

the deplorable state of affairs. By the end of the month Humphrey was gone.[9]

The early months of 1866 saw no decline in such incidents. Young Rabb, administrator for Conecuh County, wrote asking for guidance as to his duties. W. C. Webb complained from Stevenson of "red tape" and "pigeonholes" between his town and the District headquarters in Huntsville. The Wisconsin native also averred that, "Since I have been here (only a little more than *two months*) there have been three different sub-agents appointed at this place — and not *one of them* has any of the 'orders' issued by you nor any from the War Department, nor from the Head of the Freemen's Bureau at Washington." Education Superintendent Chaplain Charles W. Buckley reported pessimistically about efforts in Talladega, saying, "Capt. Taylor had been but recently assigned to that position [Assistant Superintendent]. The frequency changes in the office of Asst. Supt. had caused great confusion in the affairs of the office, which combined with the inexperience of the present occupant, and the inefficiency of the Surgeon, compelled me to think that little has been done, of late, either to better the condition of the Freedmen or relieve the appalling destitution of the poor white." As personnel adjustments occurred confusion and frustration grew and continuity was dissipated.[10]

In 1867 reports reaching Montgomery revealed the same problems. James McGogy, the ubiquitous Bureau official wrote disconsolately of freedmen's affairs in the Talladega area, calling attention to the fact that, ". . . no officer [was present] at this Sub-District when the employer and employee were contracting for the coming year . . . ." James Seales of Lebanon, reported somewhat incredulously that, "the agent for the Bureau in this county knows nothing about the laws or rules of the Bureau or Civil Rights Bill . . . ."[11]

[9]O. S. Abbott to Brig. Gen. Wager Swayne, September 14, 1865; Brt. Maj. Gen. A. L. Chetlain to Swayne, November 10, 1865; T. Humphrey to Brig. Gen. Wager Swayne, November 30, December 8, 1865, Letters Received, BRFAL, Ala.

[10]Young Rabb to Gen. Wager Swayne, January 10, 1866; W. C. Webb to Brevt. Maj. Genl. Wager Swayne, February 1, 1866, Letters Received; Chaplain C. W. Buckley to Brvt. Maj. Genl. Wager Swayne, January 16, 1866, Sub-District Reports, BRFAL, Ala.

[11]J. F. McGogy to Col. O. D. Kinsman, August 3, 1867, Sub-District Reports; Jas. A. Seales to Gen. Swayne, January 11, 1867, Letters Received, BRFAL, Ala.

Changes in administration, however, did not alone create the problems. Bureaucracy, the chain of command, and communications all played major roles. Constant requests poured into Montgomery for adjudication of cases, for orders, for guidance, often in areas that were unimportant or should have been dealt with at the local level. Bureau veterans such as John B. Callis, James McGogy, and Samuel Gardner, men who served in Alabama for years, were still writing for guidance in local problems by 1867.

In late 1867, Colonel Callis wrote Swayne regarding the abuse of freedmen's rights in crop distribution. Callis said, "May I *beg you* to give this matter your immediate attention?"' Samuel Gardner, Greenville's Sub-Assistant Commissioner, was forced to expend valuable time writing headquarters requesting appropriations to purchase a carving knife and spring balance for cutting and weighing bacon for the destitute. Gardner also needed funds to purchase four coffins to bury deceased Bureau hospital patients. On another occasion the Greenville bureaucrat submitted a year-old bill, in triplicate, to pay for, among other things, a well bucket and some rope. James McGogy in Talladega was equally cautious, asking for permission to purchase $33 worth of cooking utensils for the local Bureau hospital. Automomy and flexibility seemed non-existent as official after official went "upstairs" to obtain approval. Requests poured in for approval of expenditures for wood, forage, horse rentals, coffin lumber, or instructions regarding such important questions as labor regulations, ration distribution, adjudication of criminal or civil cases, and apprenticeship violations. In each instance the local agent either did not have or did not feel that he had sufficient authority to act on his own-initiative. At times the bureaucratic tangle seemed insurmountable. A local agent sadly wrote Swayne about his impotence. "[It] makes the position I hold a very unpleasant one not being able to do for the negroes what I promised when they contracted for the year."[12]

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[12]Bt. Brig. Gen. Jno. B. Callis to Major General Wager Swayne, November 8, 1867; Sam. S. Gardner to O. D. Kinsman, September 7, 1867; Sam. S. Gardner to Lt. J. F. Conyngham, March 27, 1867; J. F. McGogy to Col. O. D. Kinsman, February 21, 1867, Letters Received; R. H. Brewer to Maj. Gen. W. Swayne, November 29, 1866, Sub-District Reports, BRFAL, Ala.

Even Ewayne occasionally became a prisoner of this process; on one occasion he wrote Howard seeking authority to sell surplus overcoats and use the funds to buy necessary clothing for women and children. Frequently the Assistant Commissioner had no other recourse than to seek aid from Washington officials. For example, in the early months of Bureau operations, Swayne repeatedly came into conflict with Treasury agents in the State. Jurisdiction was confused and authority insufficient to handle routine local problems. Swayne, in frustration, sought aid from above. "Major Noff, a Treasury agent at Selma is taking possession of lands and buildings owned by the late rebel government . . . . His claim is supported by superior authority, and I respectfully request that it be authoritatively set aside."[13]

One of the most debilitating displays of bureaucratic entanglement confronting Swayne was the struggle by the Alabama Bureau to obtain a suitable school site in Mobile. In 1865, a black school was instituted in the Mobile Medical College. It was a sizeable building that afforded excellent facilities for a graded school in one of the State's major cities. Despite Bureau control, the Trustees of the College were anxious to have the building returned. Swayne was equally anxious to maintain control. Early in 1866, Swayne was ordered by the Secretary of War to return the building to its owners and find another site for black education in Mobile. Reluctantly he moved to carry out this order until the inflammatory rhetoric of Dr. J. C. Nott, a conservative Mobilian and Bureau antagonist, and the burning of black churches in Mobile indicated to Swayne that black education was not safe outside the college building.[14]

At this point the General turned to the Marine hospital as the only viable alternative for black education in Mobile.

[13]Saml. S. Gardner to Chas. A. Miller, August 24, 1865; C. Cadle, Jr. to S. S. Gardner, September 15, 1865; S. S. Gardner to C. Cadle, Jr., October 2, 1865, Letters Received; Swayne to Howard, January 17, 1866, September 14, 1865, Telegrams Sent, BRFAL, Ala.

[14]Bt. Maj. Genl. Wager Swayne to Colonel George D. Robinson, February 22, 1866; Bvt. Maj. Genl. Wager Swayne to Rt. Rev. Richard H. Wilmer, D. D., February 26, 1866; A. A. G. to Bt. Maj. Gen. W. Swayne, March 10, 1866, Letters Sent; J. C. Nott, M. D. to Gen. O. O. Howard, November 7, 1865, Letters Received, BRFAL, Ala.

Between March and September 1866, Swayne underwent an incredible experience attempting to acquire the building. On going to the Treasury Department to obtain transfer to the Bureau, Swayne discovered the building was controlled by the War Department. Obtaining approval from the Secretary of War, Swayne moved to acquire the facility only to be confronted by Mobile Treasury officials who still mistakenly believed the Treasury Department controlled the hospital. To satisfy these bureaucrats, the Assistant Commissioner personally obtained transfer approval from the Secretary of the Treasury Hugh McCulloch. Even so, delays persisted. Fear of moving patients during small-pox and cholera season as well as the difficulty in obtaining a new facility slowed the process. Swayne, perhaps with tongue in cheek, suggested an exchange, transfering the patients to the Mobile Medical College and the students to the hospital. Swayne persisted, however, if only to thwart the Mobile incendiaries who seemed determined to burn any church used for educational purposes. He was determined to have a building "which they cannot set on fire."[15]

By the end of 1866 the Assistant Commissioner had decided to take occupancy March, 1867. Yet in March he finally had to admit defeat and abandon all hope of securing the building for black education. Recognizing defeat, he then moved to establish separate but permanent schools for Mobile blacks in other ways. Red tape, combined with Southern white hostility, had defeated an otherwise sound educational endeavor.[16]

In relief, the red tape seemed to inhibit an otherwise able effort. Colonel Callis, the Huntsville Sub-Assistant Commissioner, complained to the Assistant Commissioner that while there was neglect, waste, and squandering of rations, he was powerless to halt the process. Rations for distribution in North

[15]Bvt. Maj. General Wager Swayne to Major General O. O. Howard, April 27, 1866, Letters Sent, BRFAL, Ala.; J. Silsby to Rev. Strieby, May 22, 1866, American Missionary Association Archives, Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee, hereinafter cited as AMAA; Major General Wager Swayne to Charles P. Gage, June 1, 1866; Major General Wager Swayne to Surg. Chas. Kipp, September 29, 1866; Maj. Gen. Wager Swayne to Bvt. Maj. Geo. H. Tracy, December 10, 1866; Maj. Gen. Wager Swayne to Maj. Genl. George H. Thomas, December 18, 1866, Letters Sent, BRFAL, Ala.

[16]Maj. Gen. Wager Swayne to Maj. E. M. K. Hudson, December 28, 1866; Maj. Genl. Wager Swayne to Rev. J. R. Shipherd, March 14, 1867, Letters Sent, BRFAL, Ala.

Alabama were sent to Callis but from there they went to the distributing agents in the counties who ". . . regard themselves as responsible to [the State Commissioner for Destitution] Mr. Cruikshanks [sic] only. I, therefore can do nothing . . . . Without definite orders from you, I don't see how I can be instrumental in causing said stores promptly and thoroughly to fulfill the mission contemplated by the appropriation for their purchase." Even if this problem could be eliminated there was still the requirement that the rations be disposed of on time. Under War Department regulations a county agent, late in picking up his county's quota, could be denied access to the supplies under restrictions prohibiting collection of back rations. Yet the limitations of time and distance could easily preclude collection within the prescribed period.[17]

Travel, of course, was always a problem, but especially for the freedpeople. Handled properly the locale of Bureau agents would have had an ameliorating effect on racial affairs. Instead, geographic decisions proved to be a chaotic bungle. Not only did the locale change indiscriminately, but agents were not always within convenient traveling distance. Freedmen often were forced to travel from 10 to 40 miles to seek aid. Many freedmen simply could not make such trips. Coercion, economic inability, and other factors easily precluded such journeys. Even if such a trip was undertaken and aid requested, there was no guarantee that a remedy would be provided. In many instances a report, inquiry, or request for approval from headquarters would cause serious delays. The trip would then have to be repeated at loss of time, perhaps wages and possible personal danger. How many trips a freedman would make under such circumstances was questionable. Already conditioned to doubt a white man's good faith or honest concern, dubious blacks were additionally disillusioned by delays, multiple trips and likely Bureau impotence. "Our hopes have been awakened and almost insured by the passage of a law & then the sending of men clothed with the proper authority to execute the law to our good & to the good of the entire people," several Mobile blacks reflected, "but as yet we

[17]M. H. Cruikshank to the Senate and House of Representatives of the State of Alabama, November n. d., 1866, Miscellaneous Reports from Staff and Bureau Officers; Bvt. Col. Jno. B. Callis to General Wager Swayne, January 15, 1867, Letters Received, BRFAL, Ala.

have realized nothing but delays, annoyance & disappointment." Another beleaguered black wrote puzzlingly, "I have spoken to Major Tracy here who, told me so many tales that, I cannot but remember the final decision made by him . . . ."[18]

In the Selma Sub-district Samuel Gardner became concerned and inquired of headquarters for relief. He had discovered that blacks in Lowndes and Autauga Counties were coming to his office rather than seeking aid at their district headquarters in Montgomery. For these people it was up to three times farther to Montgomery than to Gardner's office in Selma. His concern was unheeded and his request for flexibility was rebuffed. Gardner was told that blacks must continue to travel the extra distance regardless of the difficulty. The problem also compounded the difficulty of ration acquisition. Often the truly needy were incapable of traveling 20 or 30 miles to draw much needed supplies. As one American Missionary Association correspondent testified, "Poor widows and orphans cannot walk 20 or 30 miles to Huntsville to Decatur to draw their rations . . . ."[19]

State borders occasionally compounded the already difficult situation. In East Alabama, residents of Russell County bordering on Georgia turned to the Columbus, Georgia headquarters for assistance as their closest source of aid. Charles Buckley, on a tour of East Alabama in early 1866, expressed concern over obvious Bureau ineffectiveness. While visiting Columbus officials, he witnessed two black Alabama women, together with their children, enter the local office to seek assistance. They had all been hit by shotgun fire from Alabama militiamen, and no redress had been available in their area. Buckley's investigation into affairs in Russell County showed the need for Bureau presence there. Indeed, conditions were so bad that even Howard's office was concerned about it. Swayne was questioned about, "what steps have been taken to right the freedmen in this dark corner of Alabama. From the within report [Buckley's] it would appear as though the

[18]Allen Alexander, *et al.* to Major Genl. Wager Swayne, June 25, 1867; G. Benedict to Maj. Gen. Pope, August 31, 1867, Letters Received, BRFAL, Ala.

[19]S. S. Gardner to C. Cadle, September 11, 1865; C. Cadle Jr. to S. S. Gardner, September 15, 1865, Letters Received, BRFAL, Ala.; Mrs. M. C. Milligan to Rev. S. Hunt, July 31, 1866, AMAA.

rebellion was still in full force and the Proclamation of Emancipation a 'dead letter'."[20]

In still other circumstances the Bureau barely penetrated many areas. Tuscaloosa Sub-Assistant Commissioner William Peck expressed concern that his agency's effectiveness did not extend beyond a 20 mile radius. An early black petition informed Swayne that in Tuscumbia, "The BeauRoue [sic] an't [sic] no more then [sic] a cat here." Reports eminating from Union Springs, Selma, Tuskegee and the Demopolis district echoed these concerns. In fact, one recent study of the Freedmen's Bureau in Alabama suggests that in the first two years of operation the agency reached less than one quarter of the State's black population.[21]

In homesteading the problems were similar. Travel and location were as burdensome here as in other areas. Where the Bureau did afford the opportunity to register for land in absentia, freedmen still had to submit a statement of financial inability to appear in person. Additionally, in early 1867, despite the right to enter land, the land office was not open for Southern and Western Alabama.[22]

If all this were not enough, local and State Bureau officials were inundated with reports and forms to be filled out and filed. Quartermaster blanks, pay vouchers, reports to the War Department regarding locale of assignment, Bureau reports of a similar character, referral of bounty requests, educational reports, referral of correspondence, endorsement of correspondence eminating from local sources, and tri-monthly ration re-

[20]Capt. P. Slaughter to Brig. Gen. D. Tillson, October 16, 1865, Letters Received; C. W. Buckley to Brvt. Col. C. Cadle Jr., January 27, 1866, endorsed by Max Woodhull, Washington, D. C., Sub-District Reports, BRFAL, Ala. Swayne also received word of a similar situation along the Mississippi-Alabama border. Wm. R. Gallian to Gen. Woods, August 19, 1865, Letters Received, BRFAL, Ala.

[21]Capt. Wm. H. H. Peck to Major O. D. Kinsman, June 20, 1866; Petter Mesenger, *et al.* to n. n., November 29, 1865; A. C. Tyree to Maj. Gen. W. Swain [sic], March 4, 1867; Capt. E. M. Clark to Brevet Col. C. Cadle, January 4, 1866; S. S. Gardner to C. Cadle, September 16, 1865; Lt. Colonel Andrew Geddis to Colonel C. Cadle Jr., December 18, 1865, Letters Received, BRFAL, Ala.; Horace McLean Holderfield, "The Freedmen's Bureau in Alabama in 1865 and 1866," (unpublished M. A. Thesis, Auburn University, 1970), 72.

[22]O. D. Kinsman to Y. M. Rabb, January 11, 1867, Letters Sent, BRFAL, Ala.

ports all plagued local personnel. This was exemplified by General Order No. 8, which Swayne issued in 1865. It stipulated that,

> Assistant Superintendents will send to this office on the first, tenth, and twentieth days of each month a report of rations issued.
>
> The report will show the number of detached soldiers, citizens, employees, persons in colony, and those relieved outside, to whom rations have been issued during the previous ten days, distinguishing between white and colored, adults and children.[23]

All these reports required significant amounts of time. Clerks might help but they were limited in ability, zeal, or availability. Even at that level bureaucracy could intervene. A series of letters between Greenville and Montgomery in 1867 exemplified the problems. Sub-Assistant Commissioner Gardner received word in May 1867, that he was about to be sent a clerk. His surprised reply that he already had employed a clerk was met by Acting Assistant Adjutant General Lieutenant J. F. Conyngham's statement that Gardner had no authority to employ a clerk. One would be sent to immediately take over that position. After a series of communiques, Gardner prevailed, maintained his original clerk, and sent back the Montgomery replacement, who turned out to be an inebriate. The status quo was eventually maintained but at the cost of considerable time, energy, and paperwork — all devoted to an embarrassing bureaucratic tangle.[24]

Such machinations and negotiations all transpired through the mails. Yet in numerous instances the mails themselves failed the Bureau, thus severely limiting effectiveness and continuity. Transportation, particularly in a State dislocated by

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[23]Maj. Genl. Wager Swayne to Bvt. Maj. S. C. Greene, January 7, 1867; O. D. Kinsman to Supts., BRFAL, February 1, 1867, Letters Sent, BRFAL, Ala.; United States House. *Executive Document No. 70,* "Letter from the Secretary of War . . . .," 39th Cong., 1st Sess., 41. For innumerable examples of this paperwork see Letters Received, BRFAL, Ala.

[24]Saml. S. Gardner to Lieut. J. F. Conyngham, May 6, 1867; Saml. S. Gardner to Col. Kinsman, May 19, 1867, Letters Received, BRFAL, Ala.

war and economic stagnation was certainly less than reliable. Mail service especially suffered from irregular post-war conditions. George O'Reilly, a Bureau inspector, found such a situation in Clarke County, Alabama, late in 1866.

> On making enquiries about the Post Office I was informed that the institution was unknown in the County.
>
> Letters directed to any person residing in Clarke Co. have to be entrusted to the clerk of some river boat, if the boat stops at this landing (Gainestown), which it rarely does on the way down the river, the letters are perhaps sent on shore, they are then kept at a Storehouse on the bank, until the advent of the first stray traveller from the interior, when they are placed at his disposal to be by him delivered, opened or lost, according as his honesty, inquisitiveness or carelessness may predominate. I was informed not one third of the letters sent have ever reached their proper destination.[25]

While Clarke County was an extreme example, it was symptomatic of an additional Bureau problem. Compounding all other conditions which deterred effectiveness was the inconsistency, if not outright failure, of communication and transportation.

Finally, one of the most debilitating aspects of the Bureau was its inability to use military force to impose its decisions. Early on, Swayne and others recognized that force would be necessary to implement the Bureau program. Throughout the fall and winter of 1865-66, Swayne urged Howard to provide necessary military aid. The Mobile, Selma, and East Alabama Sub-Districts were in need of military support in 1865, both for agents and enforcement. Atrocities, labor violations and other problems required the ameliorating impact of "bayonets." In an attempt to obtain more support, Montgomery catalogued crimes for which troops were unavailable for redress. Even in the employment of military commissions

[25]George O'Reilly to O. D. Kinsman, October 17, 1866, Sub-District Reports, BRFAL, Ala.

for trials, General Charles R. Wood pled insufficiency of troops or officers to establish such boards.[26]

Colonel Callis emphasized the problem when he complained, "I am utterly powerless. If I am expected to guard the interests of the negro, secure him in the exercise of his rights and privileges, restore property stolen or appropriated, mete out justice to thieves, robbers and murderers and [countless] other things, I must have, and demand the military power to do it. As I am now situated, I have not a single bayonet with which to enforce any measures I may think it necessary and expedient to adopt . . . ."[27]

Callis's sentiments were echoed by many other Bureau officials across the State, as well as by the freedmen themselves. William V. Turner, a black teacher and future politicians, implored the Bureau to protect Wetumpka blacks from the abuses of local white officials. From Dadeville, Thomas Young appealed to General Shepherd for protection. Young had been assaulted by a white and could find no assistance or protection as the town had no sheriff. Even his letter seeking aid had to be sent from another town because his assailant was an official in the local Post Office.[28]

Unfortunately, in some instances, even when the military was present, it did not produce positive results. In December 1865, Swayne's headquarters received several complaints of military intransigence. In each instance the local military commander refused to accede to the wishes of a Bureau ad-

[26]Brig. Gen. Wager Swayne to Maj. Gen. O. O. Howard, September 11, 1865, January 31, 1866; Lewis E. Parsons to President Andrew Johnson, August 29, 1865, Letters Sent; Bvt. Col. C. Cadle Jr. to Maj. Gen. C. R. Woods, March 27, 1866, Letters Received, BRFAL, Ala.

[27]Bvt. Col. Jno. B. Callis to n. n., August 9, 1866, Letters Received, BRFAL, Ala.

[28]S. S. Gardner to C. Cadle Jr., September 16, November 1, 1865; Capt. F. Grabenhorst to Gen. Swayne, October 31, 1865; T. W. Goodfellow to Swayne, December 25, 1865; Capt. F. O. Steinberg to Colonel C. Cadle Jr., April 13, 1866; Capt. Wm. H. H. Peck to Major O. D. Kinsman, April 20, 1866; Benj. F. Porter to Major Genl. Wager Swayne, April 28, 1866; D. H. Bingham to Lieut. Genl. U. S. Grant, May 19, 1866; J. F. McGogy to Col. O. D. Kinsman, October 21, 1867; W. H. Hunter to Genl. n. n., August 16, 1868; R. A. Wilson to Bt. Lt. Col. Edwin Beecher, September 3, 1868; William V. Turner to Gen. Wager Swayne, November 17, 1865; Thos. Young to Gen. O. L. Shepherd, April 28, 1868, Letters Received, BRFAL, Ala.

ministrator. The Quartermaster in Selma refused to issue stores to the Assistant Superintendent without orders from Swayne through the Quartermaster in Montgomery. Colonel Gandolfo in Greenville even refused to recognize T. W. Mostyn as the head of the Bureau for that area. Two months later Mostyn was still complaining of military interference with no apparent help from Montgomery. Lacking the power and cooperation of the military, the Bureau was unable to protect freedmen's rights, allow for racial adjustment, or halt the coercion of freedpeople to keep them from even appealing to the Bureau for aid.[29]

While few will argue that the Alabama Bureau failed to provide a rational vehicle for Reconstruction, why it failed is still very much at issue. In Alabama the problem was institutional. Initially the identification of the military as the purveyor of social change was a crucial blunder. The rigid nature of the military, an organization so familiar with the concept of deference, chain of command, and the maintenance of the status quo certainly did not lend itself to the dynamics of race reform.

Further, from its entry into the State in 1865 until its demise five years later, the agency was plagued by instability and weakness. The continuous movement of Bureau agents and their headquarters led to a serious lack of continuity which in turn created confusion for the freedmen. Even when the former bondsmen were able to locate a Bureau agent, chances for successful resolution of their problems were seriously hampered by lack of local autonomy, chaotic communication systems, and the inability to use military force to implement decisions.

[29]W. Irving Mieller to Col. C. Cadle, December 15, 1865; Lt. J. B. Morgan to Col. C. Cadle Jr., December 12, 19, 21, 1865; T. Mostyn to Col. C. Cadle Jr., December 14, 1865, February 18, 1866; Capt. Wm. H. H. Peck to Bvt. Maj. O. D. Kinsman, October 9, 1866, Letters Received; Capt. Wm. H. H. Peck to Bvt. Maj. O. D. Kinsman, October 10, 1866, Sub-District Reports; Over a year later reports of troublesome troops were still arriving from Greenville and Huntsville. Sam. S. Gardner to Lieut. J. F. Conyngham, February 17, 1867; Bvt. Col. John B. Callis to Maj. Genl. Wager Swayne, January 16, 1867, Letters Received, BRFAL, Ala. Inadequate troop strength is clearly delineated in James Sefton's *The United States Army and Reconstruction, 1865-1877* (Baton Rouge, 1967), 261-62. Troop strength in Alabama declined from a high of 35,100 in June 1865, to less than 1000 by late 1866.

As Martin Abbott asserted in his study of the South Carolina Freedmen's Bureau, ". . . the real test of the Bureau's worth is to be found not so much in the aims of Congress in creating it, or in the will of the national Commissioner in directing it, but, rather, in how well or how feebly it met at the local level the actual needs of those whom it was designed to serve. As a human institution, its ultimate success or failure depended mainly upon the kind of response its agents and officers in the field gave to the challenge before them . . . ."[30]

It is this test which the Alabama Bureau fails. The organizational pressures on the agency were such that it substantially collapsed in a tangle of bureaucracy. In the attempt to translate national policy to local needs the aspirations of the freedmen and the hopes for racial adjustment were virtually strangled by red tape.

[30]Abbott, *Freedmen's Bureau,* vii-viii.

BUSINESS SUCCESS AND LEADERSHIP IN ALABAMA: A PRELIMINARY INQUIRY

by

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Warner O. Moore

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Assessing business "success" is fraught with the difficulty of determining what a society considers "success" to be. But if peer approval can be used as a guide, a significant effort has been made toward studying the history of business leadership of Alabama in the first twenty-six selections to the Alabama Business Hall of Fame.[1]

Created in 1973 by the Board of Visitors of the College of Commerce and Business Administration at The University of Alabama to "honor, preserve, and perpetuate the names and outstanding accomplishments of business personalities who have brought lasting fame to the state," the Hall of Fame is the first of its kind in the nation. Nominations are made by a thirty-six member committee, representative of the geographical areas and major categories of business in Alabama. All candidates must have been deceased or in retirement at least three years except those who are 55 years of age and older and still active in business. The first twenty-six honorees were inducted posthumously.

The nature of the selection process, of course, influences the composition of this sample. Longevity of business career

[1]An earlier study is Justin Fuller, "Alabama Business Leaders: 1865-1900," *Alabama Review,* XVI (October 1963), 279-86, and XVII (January 1964), 63-65, which analyzes the careers of 186 Alabama business leaders in terms of their places of origin, family status, educational levels, military service, and political and religious activities. Fuller's analysis concentrates on characteristics of Alabama's late nineteenth-century business elite in a fashion similar to that of national studies. The most recent such study, which contains a thorough review of the literature on the subject is Jocelyn M. Ghent and Frederick C. Jaher, "The Chicago Business Elite: 1830-1930. A Collective Biography," *Business History Review,* L (August 1976), 288-328. Our study is oriented more toward individual personal charteristics.

and civic involvement increase the likelihood that a prospective inductee has been personally known to the members of the nominating body. Only seven of the twenty-six inductees, for example died before 1960. Nineteenth-century figures therefore have been lightly considered to date, and as a result, the state's coal, iron, steel, and railroad industries are underrepresented. This relative absence, however, is as much a statement about the nature of those industries in the twentieth century in Alabama as it is a comment on the selection process.

Table 1 lists the twenty-six subjects of this study in chronological order and indicates their principal areas of business activity, places of birth, chief residences, and educational levels. To relate individual careers to broader business and economic patterns, the twenty-six leaders have been grouped roughly by decade of birth. Pratt, the only antebellum figure, occupies one group by himself. Miller and Comer, both born in the 1840's, represent the Civil War and Reconstruction generation. Henderson, Pizitz, McGowin, Shook, Johnson, Russell, Rushton, Moody, and Jemison — all born between 1860 and 1878 — represent the immediate post-Civil War generations. Martin, Bedsole, Bidgood, Ayers, Persons, McMillan, and May — all born between 1881 and 1889 — represent the generation that matured in the early twentieth century. Sterne, Spragins, Warner, Samford, Malone, and Roberts — all born between 1892 and 1898 — represent Alabama's business leadership in the post-World War I period. Smith, born in 1906, belongs wholly to the twentieth century.[2]

Our first group consists of Daniel Pratt, who is generally regarded as Alabama's first significant industrialist. A native of Temple, New Hampshire, he received rudimentary education, was apprenticed as a carpenter, and moved to Georgia in 1821 at the age of twenty-two. There he worked as a carpenter, builder, and architect before becoming associated with the making of cotton gins. In 1833 he ventured to fresher cotton lands in central Alabama to establish his own factory. After several years of renting mill sites, he purchased water

[2]Brief biographical sketches of these twenty-six business leaders are available in the annual programs for 1974-78 of the induction ceremonies for the Alabama Business Hall of Fame in the files of the Executive Director maintained in the College of Commerce and Business Administration at The University of Alabama.

TABLE I

THE FIRST TWENTY-SIX INDUCTEES OF THE ALABAMA BUSINESS HALL OF FAME

Name	Dates	Area of Business	Place of Birth	Chief Residence(s)	Education
Daniel Pratt	1799-1873	Durable Manufacturing (Iron Products)	Temple, New Hampshire	Prattville	Apprenticeship
Thomas R. Miller	1843-1914	Durable Manufacturing (Lumber)	Escambia County (then Conecuh, Alabama)	Brewton	None
Braxton Bragg Comer	1848-1927	Nondurable Manufacturing (Textiles)	Barbour County, Alabama	Eufaula, Anniston, Birmingham	College
Charles Henderson	1860-1937	Wholesale Trade (Groceries)	Pike County, Alabama	Troy	Some College
Louis Pizitz	1868-1959	Retail Trade (General Merchandise)	Brest-Litovsk, Poland	Birmingham	Rabbinate
James Greeley McGowin	1871-1934	Durable Manufacturing (Lumber)	Escambia County, Alabama	Chapman	Rural School
Paschal Green Shook	1872-1966	Wholesale Trade (Mining Equipment)	Tracy City, Tennessee	Birmingham	High School
Crawford Toy Johnson	1873-1942	Wholesale Trade	Danville, Virginia	Birmingham	College
Benjamin Russell	1876-1941	Nondurable Manufacturing (Textiles)	Tallapoosa County, Alabama	Alexander City	College
James Franklin Rushton	1876-1927	Wholesale Trade (Ice)	Columbus, Tennessee	Birmingham	High School

Name	Dates	Area of Business	Place of Birth	Chief Residence(s)	Education
Frank Maxwell Moody	1877-1941	Banking	Tuscaloosa, Alabama	Tuscaloosa	College
Robert Jemison, Jr.	1878-1974	Real Estate	Tuscaloosa, Alabama	Birmingham	College
Thomas Wesley Martin	1881-1964	Electrical Power	Scottsboro, Alabama	Birmingham	College
Joseph Linyer Bedsole	1881-1975	Wholesale trade (General Merchandise; Drugs)	Clarke County, Alabama	Thomasville, Mobile	Business School
Lee Bidgood	1884-1963	Business Education	Norfolk County, Virginia	Tuscaloosa	Ph.D.
Harry Mell Ayers	1885-1964	Newspaper Publishing	Anniston, Alabama	Anniston	College
John Cecil Persons	1888-1974	Banking	Atlanta, Georgia	Birmingham	College
Ed Leigh McMillan	1888-1977	Durable Manufacturing (Lumber)	Escambia County, Alabama	Brewton	College
Ben E. May	1889-1972	Durable Manufacturing (Lumber)	Atlanta, Georgia	Mobile	Some College
Mervyn Hayden Sterne	1892-1973	Investment Banking	Anniston, Alabama	Birmingham	High School
Marion Beirne Spragins	1892-1973	Banking	Huntsville, Alabama	Huntsville	College
Elizabeth Westervelt Warner	1893-1974	Nondurable Manufacturing (Paper)	Mechanicsville, New York	Tuscaloosa	Some College

Frank Park Samford	1893-1973	Life Insurance	Troy, Alabama	Birmingham	College
Wallace Davis Malone, Sr.	1896-1968	Banking	Dothan, Alabama	Dothan	College
Edward Aubert Roberts	1898-1964	Transportation	Mobile, Alabama	Mobile	Some College
James Craig Smith	1905-1977	Nondurable Manufacturing (Textiles)	Birmingham, Alabama	Birmingham	College

rights and land on Autauga Creek near Montgomery, built his cotton gin factory, and established the town of Prattville. Although Pratt added lumber, grist, and cotton mills to his enterprises and became a vigorous antebellum spokesman for Southern industrialization, his cotton gin enterprise was the base of his fortune. In 1860 Alabama led the union in the production of cotton gin machinery, largely due to Pratt's factory.[3]

Pratt's willingness to take a risk, coupled with technical knowledge, market opportunity, and vision, marked his success. When he took his wife and manufacturing materials by wagon into Alabama, the area had been a state for only fourteen years; legend has it that his Georgia partner declined the venture, fearing Indians. Between 1830 and 1835, predominance in the production of cotton shifted from the Atlantic states to the Gulf states, and Pratt and his gins were there to meet the opportunity. In the mid 1850s he became a major stockholder and director of one of the state's earliest railroads, the South and North Alabama, which eventually fulfilled the geographical connection of its title and created circumstances for the founding of Birmingham in 1871. Pratt held stock in one of the first iron furnaces (at Oxmoor in 1863) in what became the Birmingham iron district. He and his son-in-law, Henry F. DeBardeleben, took over the postwar rebuilding effort of that furnace, incorporated as the Red Mountain Iron and Coal Company. In 1876, three years after Pratt's death, DeBardeleben and his associates made iron from Alabama coke in a fashion promising effective production, thus striking the spark that later ignited the Birmingham iron boom.[4]

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[3]No extended scholarly treatment of Pratt's life is available. An excellent short article, citing further bibliographical sources, is Randall M. Miller, "Daniel Pratt's Industrial Urbanism: The Cotton Mill Town in Ante-Bellum Alabama," *Alabama Historical Quarterly,* XXXIV (Spring 1972), 5-36.

[4]As previously noted, the nature of the selection process for induction into the Alabama Business Hall of Fame has left the nineteenth century coal, iron, steel, and railroad industries underrepresented. Fortunately, the single best work on Alabama's business and industrial development is Ethel Armes, *The Story of Coal and Iron in Alabama* (Birmingham, 1910), which colorfully depicts the work and times of such nineteenth century business leaders as Truman Aldrich, Henry F. DeBardeleben, Enoch Ensley, the Noble brothers, Horace Ware, and the Woodward brothers.

The single most significant key to Pratt's success may well have been his ability to see the most promising possibility of fresh technological capability juxtaposed with geographical opportunity. The key may well have been not what he knew, which was, of course, important, but what he saw.

Our second group consists of Miller and Comer, who both experienced the Civil War as young men and established careers in the difficult postwar years. Miller was released as a Confederate prisoner of war at the age of twenty-two. Comer was a student cadet at The University of Alabama when Federal troops raided the campus in April, 1865. The sixteen-year old Comer walked home to Barbour County, where his widowed mother and five brothers held on to the family plantation. Miller, who had only the barest of education, went directly to work in his native Escambia County. Comer, already exposed to university training, completed college in Georgia and Virginia, returning to Barbour County in 1869. Both men recognized the need to break their dependence upon agriculture, but they found different paths to other enterprises.

Miller, a farmer, began producing timber as an alternate source of income. After gathering crops, he cut timber and floated it down the Escambia River to Ferry Pass or Pensacola, Florida. After selling the timber, he walked home. Two years of this process produced capital for marriage; two more years, the purchase of a small grist and saw mill; six more years, a partnership in a water-powered lumber mill on the Conecuh River; eleven more years, investment in a larger mill. Miller's tenacity and native intelligence took on added status as Northern timber sources declined and Southern yellow pine began competing effectively with the white pine and hemlock of the Great Lakes and Northwest regions. Lumber production in the South doubled between 1880 and 1890; the value of the saw-mill products of that section rose during the decade from $40,000,000 to $188,000.000.[5]

In 1899 Miller planned to retire, but he was attracted into the purchase of a large timber company and mill facility at Brewton. His decision was well-timed. An even greater boom

[5]See Victor S. Clark, *History of Manufactures in the United States* (New York, 1929), II, 482.

in Southern lumbering occurred after 1900. Lumbering became the largest industry in the South, employing one of every three wage earners and producing half the nation's lumber. Miller's operation became quite profitable, enabling him to invest in numerous other enterprises.

Miller's success thus appears to have been due to staying in the right place to capitalize on the demand for the natural resource that surrounded him. Still, many tried their hand at the late nineteenth-century lumber business in Alabama. Many more remained marginal farmers. Only Miller and a few others became sustained successes, bequeathing their businesses to future generations. The dominant philosophy of the time was to cut and get out, but Miller was one of the first to realize that the way to perpetuate his business was to cut only the mature trees, leaving the others to grow. Perhaps the key was that Miller was of the land that sustained him, and he cared for it.

Whereas Miller profited by staying where he was, Comer is an excellent example of the business leader, who, like Daniel Pratt, profited by willingly changing focus and by moving to where the opportunity was. After 1869, when Comer returned to Barbour County, he became one of the largest producers of cotton in the state. The price of cotton dropped steadily in the postwar years, however, and as Comer's land holdings grew, he became an absentee merchant-landlord, whose principal financial success rested in a general store and a grist mill. Comer, moreover, perceived the importance of developments in other parts of the state. By 1872 new railroad lines were providing access to the mineral wealth of central Alabama, and new industrial towns such as Birmingham and Anniston had been founded. By 1881 the iron industry was firmly established in both cities. In the meantime, the difficulties besetting agriculture mounted, and in 1885 Comer moved his family to Anniston. Although he continued to farm his land in Barbour County, Comer's energies in Anniston were devoted primarily to a wholesale grain and commission business.

Comer soon discovered that Georgia's local railroad rates were lower than those in Alabama and that he could not com-

pete with Georgia merchants. Realizing that the Georgia railroad commission had mandatory powers to fix rates whereas Alabama's commission did not, Comer advocated a stronger Alabama Railroad Commission and first entered into the controversy that eventually carried him to the governorship of the state.[6]

In 1890 Comer moved to Birmingham, where competing rail lines afforded more attractive freight rates. He purchased the City National Bank, becoming its president, and continued his interest in the wholesale grain and commission business as president of the Birmingham Corn and Flour Mills.

The economic depression of the mid-1890s bore down particularly hard on Birmingham, since the city dwellers could not fall back for sustenance on agriculture, itself already depressed. Wage-paying jobs were essential, and in the late 1890s Comer led in promoting a textile mill to provide jobs for the wives of the men who worked in Birmingham's iron and steel industry. In 1897 he became president of Avondale Mills, which soon became his chief business concern.

Comer personally put the business on its feet, oversaw modest expansion, and then managed the firm in concert with his son while governor (1907-11). In 1912 he borrowed $100,000 to keep the firm moving and thereby secured majority control of the firm's stock. World War I demand made Avondale a profitable enterprise and established the base for further expansion in the 1920s.[7]

As with Pratt, the key to Comer's success appears to have been his vision, his sense of what was needed next, whether that need be a personal shift of location and of business focus or a statewide shift to more effective transportation policies and educational opportunities (the latter the chief feature of his governorship). The breadth and achievement of Comer's ca-

[6]See James F. Doster, *Railroads in Alabama Politics, 1875-1914* (University, Ala., 1957) and *Alabama's First Railroad Commission, 1881-1885* (University, Ala., 1949).

[7]On the twentieth-century textile industry, see Louis Galambos, *Competition and Cooperation: the Emergence of a National Trade Association* (Baltimore, 1966). Alabama's textile history is relatively unexplored.

reer, the manner in which his key moves capitalized on overall patterns in Alabama's history, his ultimate success as one of the beleagued Civil War and Reconstruction generation, all suggest the need for a carefully done and searching biography.

Our third group consists of the honorees born between 1860 and 1878. Four realized success through trade, two through nondurable manufacturing, one through durable manufacturing, one through banking, and one through real estate. Of these nine leaders of the immediate post-Civil War generation, five were associated with the development of Birmingham, one with Tuscaloosa, one with Alexander City, one with the forests of south Alabama, and one with Troy, a late nineteenth-century mercantile distribution point for southeast Alabama.

Charles Henderson moved from a small farm as a child to Troy, where his father operated a general store. In 1877 he left Howard College (located in Marion) upon the death of his father and at the age of seventeen entered the family business with his two brothers. In 1886 he was elected mayor of Troy; in 1888 he opened the first wholesale grocery in the area. By 1900 he could retire from active management of business affairs to devote time to investments and public service. He formed a telephone and telegraph company in 1904, a bank in 1906, and an electric power company in 1913. A venture into textile manufacturing proved unsuccessful. He served six terms as mayor of Troy, in several capacities on the staffs of governors of the state, as state railroad commissioner (1906-14), and as governor (1915-19).[8]

No dramatic event explains Henderson's success. His mercantile establishment profited from Troy's geographical position at the end of exsiting rail lines of the day, and his retention of elected office testified to his ability to win confidence and to his perseverance and initiative. Twenty-three years as a local businessman and political leader preceded his achieving statewide prominence.

The career of James Greeley McGowin parallels somewhat that of his fellow Escambia County lumberman, T. R. Miller.

[8]See Margaret Pace Farmer, "Governor Charles Henderson," *Alabama Review,* IX (October, 1956), 243-50.

McGowin's father was one of two brothers out of seven who survived the Civil War. Young McGowin attended a few rural schools but spent most of his youth helping his father operate a small farm, store, blacksmith shop, and lumber mill. With that experience and a few weeks of business school in Lexington, Kentucky, McGowin opened a mercantile business in Brewton in 1892 in partnership with a brother-in-law. In 1903 he moved to Mobile to join with two brothers in the lumber exporting business. Two years later the three McGowins and another brother-in-law purchased the W. T. Smith Lumber Company in Chapman in Butler County. McGowin moved to Chapman as general manager. In 1907 McGowin's firm merged with a neighboring mill, thus establishing a practice of expanding by acquiring other operations and thereby becoming a firm that stayed with the land rather than cutting it over and abandoning it. By 1925 when McGowin became company president, a number of other firms had been so acquired. The lumbering challenges facing McGowin following World War I differed from those facing Miller, who had died in 1914. Many Southern timber industries began to suffer in the 1920s as old timber ran out, not yet replenished by reforestation. McGowin diversified and used all possible lumber for crates, barrels, boxes, and veneers. His firm thus weathered the Great Depression.

According to the McGowin family, the firm's key move was the first acquisition of another company in 1907. Had that acquisition failed, as it almost did, the prospect was that the young firm might have been but one of many "cut and get out" operations with new land. McGowin's firm could plan cutting operations for a number of years in the future. McGowin's determination, reflected in many aspects of his life, and his ability to adapt to changing circumstances in the lumber industry appear to be personal success factors.[9]

At about the same time that McGowin was developing his

[9]Forest History Society, comp., *James Greeley McGowin — South Alabama Lumberman: The Recollections of His Family* (Santa Cruz Calif., 1977). Comment on the acquisition of the Dunham Lumber Company in 1907 is found on p. 32. A full history of Alabama's lumber industry remains to be written, but see John M. Collier, *The First Fifty Years of the Southern Pine Association, 1915-1965* (New Orleans, 1965).

career, Benjamin Russell was building a successful career in the textile industry across the state in Tallapoosa County. Russell's family had moved from a farm to nearby Alexander City in 1884 when Ben was eight years old. Russell began work immediately, sweeping out a furniture store, then selling, running errands, and keeping books at a local bank, and then (in 1894) publishing a successful monthly magazine for the Southern Philatelic Association, which he had organized. He financed in part his education at the University of Virginia by managing the college yearbook and newspaper. A brief stint as a lawyer in Birmingham ended in 1900 when his father died, and he joined his brother and sister in selling the family mercantile business and in starting a bank. Russell soon turned to textiles, organizing a company which purchased a nearby knitting mill, moving its machinery to Alexander City, and leaving the banking business to his brother. After an initial year of deficit operation, Russell sold a local telephone company he had organized and repurchased the stock others had bought in the knitting mill. In 1908 he added a spinning operation.

In 1912 the turning point in Russell's career occurred. Realizing the advantages of hydroelectric power over steam, Russell had acquired in 1911 a dam site and flood rights on the Tallapoosa River, five miles east of Alexander City. The Alabama Power Company claimed prior flood rights. After extensive negotiations, Russell sold his unfinished dam and obtained a power line into Alexander City and reduced electrical rates, thereby placing his firm in strategic position to meet all competition.

Russell's business expanded. By 1926 his enterprises included three mills in Alexander City, and he decided that he was creating more employment for women than for men. Reversing a common procedure (one that had led Comer into the textile industry, for example), Russell created jobs for the husbands of many of his employees by establishing in 1926 a foundry in Alexander City to manufacture sewer pipe. Between 1927 and 1931 Russell created an integrated network of textile facilities for processing raw cotton to finished cloth products. Russell realized that the South had long suffered from the consequences of producing low value-added goods

only one step removed from raw products. Many Southern textile mills, for example, produced "grey goods" that were sent to Northern factories for bleaching, dying, and conversion into finished cloth. Russell added a weaving mill and bleaching mill to his operations and sought to develop better grades of cotton through research and experimentation on his own farm lands, distributing the improved seed to farmers all over Alabama. In the early 1930s Russell turned more responsibility for his enterprises over to his three sons and devoted even more of his attention to his community and to his state.

As the Russell family's history has been entwined with Alexander City, so has the history of the Moody family been entwined with Tuscaloosa. Frank Maxwell Moody was the third generation of his family to engage in the banking business in Tuscaloosa and the fifth generation of his family to dwell there. Moody attended local schools, worked in the dime store and in his father's bank as a youth, and compiled an outstanding record in athletics and academics at the nearby state university. Upon graduation in 1897 he became a messenger and junior clerk with the First National Bank of Tuskaloosa. One might erroneously assume that his path was thus assured in the family business; Moody's experience was more real than assumption. Each day after work in the early years, he mounted a horse and rode about the countryside selling insurance to supplement his salary. From this endeavor came a partnership in an insurance firm. In 1921 Moody became president of the bank upon the death of his father. For the next two decades, he advanced his banking firm and served in various positions of local and state civic and professional leadership and upon the boards of numerous corporations. Unlike Comer and others who advanced their careers by moving to new opportunities, Moody represented another kind of leader who found his place in standing by his local community in every trial, in spite of opportunities offered him in Birmingham, New York, and Washington.

The careers of the other five inductees representing the immediate post-Civil War and Reconstruction generation were all associated with the city of Birmingham.[10] They represent

[10]The most recent study of Birmingham is Carl V. Harris, *Political Power in Birmingham, 1871-1921* (Knoxville, 1977), which contains a bibliographical essay on other sources.

a range of interests.

By the mid-1880s the development of Birmingham entered a new phase when the success of its pioneer coke furnaces prompted the Tennessee Coal, Iron and Railroad Company (TCI) to begin furnace development in the city. One of the founders of TCI was Alfred Montgomery Shook.[11] When TCI moved its corporate headquarters to Birmingham in 1892, Shook's son, Paschal Green Shook, came with it as a stenographer to the firm's general manager.

Young Shook had spent his youth in Tracy City, Tennessee, TCI's company town, where he learned stenography working for his father during summer vacation from school. In his first job with the Southern Iron Company of Chattanooga, a firm organized by his father, he gained valuable experience in steel manufacturing, and his work in TCI's headquarters in Birmingham furthered his business knowledge and experience. In 1896 TCI's president asked him to investigate the prospect of making steel in Birmingham. Shook visited Northern steel mills and prepared a perceptive report recommending the construction of open-hearth furnaces in Birmingham. Shook assisted his father in the building of the new plant as secretary-treasurer of the TCI construction subsidiary and became assistant general superintendent of the operating facility. The first steel was produced on Thanksgiving Day, 1899.

For two years Shook continued his work with TCI, but in 1901 as a result of the purchase of that company and subsequent reorganization Shook and many other officers lost their positions. Shook and another former TCI officer then established a manufacturer's agency selling to coal mine and electrical utility operations. By 1910 the company began mining ore, and in 1913 Shook's younger brother, James Warner Shook, bought out the older Shook's former partner. Warner Shook's mining experience enabled the firm to expand its mining operations to coincide with World War I demand for iron products.

Shook's subsequent civic contributions endeared him to the Birmingham community. His business success hinged on

[11]See Armes, *The Story of Coal and Iron in Alabama,* 360-93.

his ability to make perceptive use of the contacts afforded him early in life and his ability to turn the loss of a corporate job into an opportunity for personal entrepreneurship.

Whereas Shook had the advantage of influential contacts early in life (by no means a guarantee of success), Louis Pizitz began in this country without much money, contacts, or ability to speak English. Pizitz, a native of Poland, studied for the rabbinate and then taught school and manufactured woolen goods. The Russians who ruled the area in which he lived, however, initiated a series of restrictions and oppressive tax policies designed to eliminate Polish Jews, and in 1889 Pizitz became one of the large number of immigrants to this country from Eastern Europe. For three years he lived as a peddler in New York, then moved to the area around Macon and Swainsboro, Georgia. He accumulated enough capital to open a general mrechandise store in Swainsboro, but the panic of 1893, the resulting depression, and the lure of a developing metropolitan center drew him to Birmingham in 1897. With a few hundred dollars he rented a small building on First Avenue North and opened his store with eight employees. Birmingham was a growing city, and Pizitz's close attention to business and his reputation for fairness brought him customers and friends. By 1937 his store had 74 departments and 600 employees. His humanitarianism was legend.

Another who capitalized on Birmingham's growth was James Franklin Rushton. The Rushton career was built on a simple need in a warm climate: ice.[12] Rushton's father, William, was a merchant in Columbia, Tennessee, when Frank was born. The elder Rushton needed some means of preservation for large quantities of perishable goods, but at that time, manufactured ice was unknown in the South and in its infancy elsewhere in the nation. Sometime in the late 1870s William Rushton noted a circular from a Chicago company which manufactured ice machines. He promptly went to Chicago and returned the owner of one of the first ice-making machines in the South. In his search for wider opportunities for his unique machine, William Rushton noted the potential of Birmingham, where he put an ice machine in operation in

[12]See Oscar E. Anderson, Jr., *Refrigeration in America: A History of a New Technology* (Princeton, 1953).

1881, thus marrying fresh technological capability to geographical opportunity.

Frank Rushton grew into the business, starting as an oiler in an engine room and serving an apprenticeship in all departments of the factory before joining with his father in the management of factories in numerous cities in Alabama, Georgia, and Tennessee. After the elder Rushton died in 1922, Frank expanded the business further, adding coal mining and distributing operations which enabled him to retain employees year round. Frank Rushton is remembered not only for his abilities as a businessman, but for his leadership of civic and charitable endeavors.

Another commercial opportunity somewhat unique to Southern needs is the soft-drink industry.[13] Crawford Toy Johnson founded the Birmingham Coca-Cola Bottling Company in 1902, after arranging with friends a dealership franchise from Asa Candler, owner of the Coca-Cola Company in Atlanta. By effectively marketing his product, Johnson profited from Birmingham's growth in the early part of the twentieth century. Johnson took the lead in testing new items — the "hobble skirt" bottle and the forerunner of the six pak take home carton, for example — and was the organizer and first president of the Coca-Cola Bottlers' Association. During the depression of the 1930s he introduced red metal vending machines to replace barrel and tub coolers.

Johnson's particular skill was that of grasping significant innovation possibilities, particularly in marketing. His original decision to secure a bottling franchise appears to have had no basis in previous experience or ambition. His father was a college professor of English, not a businessman, and Johnson held various jobs after graduating from the University of Mississippi, settling temporarily in Chattanooga as a deputy clerk in the U.S. District and Circuit Court. Once in the bottling business, however, Johnson displayed a knack for keep-

[13]See John J. Riley, *A History of the American Soft Drink Industry: Bottled Beverages, 1807-1957* (Washington, D.C., 1958). The Coca-Cola Company has published *The Coca-Cola Company: An Illustrated Profile* (Atlanta, 1974), but the firm's chairman of the board points out in that book's preface that "it is by no means a final or complete account."

ing his product fresh before the public.

The last of our sample of business leaders born in the immediate post-Civil War and Reconstruction years represents a commodity always in demand: real estate.[14] Robert Jemison, Jr., was born in Tuscaloosa, the descendent of West Alabama pioneer business entrepreneurs. As did so many others, Jemison's father moved his family (in 1884) to Birmingham during the town's initial boom period. Bob Jemison began his business career in 1899 as a hardware store clerk. Four years later he launched his own real estate and insurance company with $5,000 capital and a one-room office. In less than a decade his real estate developments had made a major mark on the city. His foresight in developing the prestigious and widely admired Mountain Brook area in the late 1920s, when many thought it too far from the business district to be successful, is particularly noteworthy. After his investments laid the base for his affairs, Jemison devoted even more of his time to civic and charitable endeavors, time freely given even before his business was fully established. Jemison's keys to success appeared to be vision and willingness to take a risk.

Our fourth group consists of the honorees born between 1881 and 1889. Birmingham was much less important to their careers than it had been to the group born in the previous decade. Only one inductee of the seven born in the 1880s is primarily associated with the business life of Birmingham.

Thomas Wesley Martin was a pioneer in providing the state with electrical power.[15] Martin's father moved the family from Scottsboro to Montgomery when young Martin was eight years old. His father served as attorney general of Alabama from 1889 to 1894, and Martin trained for the law at The University of Alabama. He entered law practice with his father

[14]Joseph A. Walton, *History of the Mobile Real Estate Association* (Mobile, 1959) represents a beginning in an area that has hardly been touched, even by the growing interest in urban studies.

[15]See Thomas W. Martin, *Forty Years of Alabama Power Company, 1911-1951* (Birmingham, 1952) and Adrian G. Daniel "J. W. Worthington, Promoter of Muscle Shoals Power," *Alabama Review,* XII (July, 1959), 196-208; and "The Origins of Muscle Shoals Power, 1896-1906," *Alabama Review,* XV (October, 1962), 253-61.

in 1901 and continued the development of a successful practice after the elder Martin's death.

Meanwhile, several corporations seeking to develop the hydroelectric potential of the Tallapoosa and Coosa rivers in East Alabama faced several difficulties. Their formation, for example, often produced complex legal questions concerning navigation and flood rights. A second difficulty was the ownership of flood rights by a number of corporations on the same river. No company could build a large dam without flooding the dam site of another group further upstream. These difficulties created a third: attracting investors.

Leadership and consolidation were needed. Martin helped supply them after James Mitchell, a Canadian who had worked with electrical development in Brazil and in the United States, persuaded him in 1912 to join the Alabama Traction, Light and Power Company, Ltd., a holding company under the laws of Canada. Martin was instrumental in working out agreements with Benjamin Russell of Alexander City and with a Montgomery group that had earlier built a power site on the Tallapoosa. These consolidations permitted the development of Alabama Power Company, the operating component of Mitchell's holding company. The first power facility — on the Coosa River — went into operation in early 1914.

In 1915 Martin opened the way to securing critical expansion capital. Property owners adjacent to the company's Coosa River reservoir filed suits, known as "mosquito suits," claiming that backwaters created by the new dam had increased the mosquito population and the number of cases of malaria in the area. At Martin's urging, Major General William Crawford Gorgas, famous for his work in clearing the Panama Canal zone of infectious mosquitoes, demonstrated to juries that the breeding places of disease-bearing mosquitoes were in small pockets of water on the properties of those bringing suit, not in the power company reservoir.

Martin became a vice-president of the company in 1915, when expansion accelerated to North Alabama. In 1920 he became president, a post he held until 1949. Martin's career demonstrated his capacity to recognize the need for the next

step in a complex situation and his willingness to take that step.

As Martin's career was built on capitalizing on shifts in the nature of energy production, the career of Joseph Linyer Bedsole was built on adapting to changing trade conditions. As Alabama's agriculture shifted from its antebellum orientation, country crossroads storekeepers became key sources of credit. The shift was abetted by the changing transportaiton system, which led rural populations to move from old river communities to new railroad towns.[16]

Bedsole's family moved to Thomasville in late 1898, where his father opened a store. Bedsole attended a small business college in Montgomery and worked there as a shoe salesman and bookkeeper before moving to Shelby County as a bookkeeper at the Calera Iron Works. In 1902 he returned to Thomasville and joined the family business. During the financial panic of 1907, Bedsole instituted the practice of cash or thirty-days credit in lieu of the crop-lein system and turned to dry goods rather than groceries and hardware. By 1913 he had developed a true department store.[17] As a local civic leader, he played a key role in deversifying the economic base of the Thomasville area: organizing several nail keg factories to make use of pine wood unsuitable for high grade lumber; developing a hog and sheep industry; and establishing a yard for purchasing scrap iron to capitalize on the World War I demand for iron.

In 1919 Bedsole moved to the burgeoning port of Mobile, where he organized and became president of a wholesale drug corporation. In the succeeding years he expanded his store in Thomasville and built a chain of department stores in southern Alabama and Mississippi. In 1928 he joined with other wholesalers across the nation in merging with the McKesson and

[16]Antebellum southern merchants have been studied in Lewis E. Atherton, *The Southern Country Store, 1800-1860* (Baton Rouge, 1949). Study of the role of merchants in Alabama's local economic development after the Civil War is needed.

[17]The development of southern department stores and chain stores has not been studied thoroughly. Frank M. Mayfield, *The Department Store Story* (New York, 1949) and H. Pasdermadjian, *The Department Store: Its Origins, Evolution, and Economics* (London, 1954) are of some use.

Robbins Drug Company, for which he became southeastern district vice-president.[18] From these bases he moved into land and timber investments and varied other enterprises and became a distinguished civic leader in Mobile.

Ben E. May came to the forests of South Alabama from Atlanta as a teenager seeking summer employment. He learned to grade hardwood, and after one year of college at the Georgia Institute of Technology he moved to Mobile in 1907 to aid his older brother in managing a lumber mill. He soon began buying cut-over land with the idea of reforesting, but the key to his business career came in slightly different form. With the outbreak of World War I in 1914 immense amounts of flour were being shipped from Gulf Coast ports to England in metal walled vessels which, upon encountering the cold water of the North Atlantic, produced condensation. The moisture spoiled the flour. The solution was wood-lined hulls. May's fortune was made in supplying wood, retaining title to it, and selling it in timber-short England. At the age of twenty-six May was a wealthy man. He invested in land in southwest Alabama, Florida, and California and become involved in many other businesses. In addition, he was renowned within the health services community as a patron of medical research.

Whereas May's business career hinged on one key circumstances, the career of Ed Leigh McMillan represents a type more common to the business generation that matured in the twentieth century. After obtaining a law degree in 1910, McMillan returned to Brewton; married his childhood sweetheart, the daughter of T. R. Miller; and began the practice of law. In early 1914 he became a legal advisor to the T. R. Miller Mill Company. Marriage brought him into an already successful business, but ability determined his sustained record of leadership, first as legal advisor, then as board member, secretary-treasurer and attorney, and finally (in 1950) as president. As with May and others inducted into the Alabama Business Hall of Fame, McMillan's record of civic and charitable contribution was also significant.

As a collede trained corporate executive, McMillan's ca-

[18]See Paul C. Olsen, *The Merchandising of Drug Products*, (New York, 1941).

reer also indicates the reason for Lee Bidgood's selection as a business leader. Bidgood, born on a farm in rural Virginia, was educated at the University of Virginia. He came to The University of Alabama in 1912 to develop studies in economics and business and soon advocated the establishment of a college of commerce. Such was done in 1920, with Bidgood as pioneer dean of the college. In 1920 Bidgood's school became the first — and for forty years thereafter remained the only — business school in Alabama accredited by the American Association of Collegiate Schools of Business.

Harry Mell Ayers was born in Anniston, the son of a journalist who turned to medicine and became the first Southern Baptist medical missionary to China (in 1901). Upon his return from China in 1903 young Ayers took up the earlier path of his father as journalist. He established and edited the school newspaper while at Jacksonville State Teacher's College. Upon graduation he became a reporter for the Anniston *Evening Star* but was fired because his free-lance articles brought him an income greater than his editor's. He then became a reporter for a rival paper, the *Hot Blast,* was promoted to city editor, and finally purchased the paper. In 1913 he bought the *Evening Star,* merged the two papers, and created the Anniston *Star.* By the 1920s Ayers was one of the state's leading political journalists, a role he played for more than fifty years.[19]

John Cecil Persons represents an area of business, finance and banking, that became increasingly important as Alabama's economic development moved from the nineteenth century into the twentieth century.[20] Persons was born in Atlanta, one of six children. After his father's death, he held several jobs as a young boy, becoming a bookkeeper for a meat packing firm in 1903. That firm transferred him to Birmingham. His talents brought him promotions, but in 1909 he quit his job to study law at The University of Alabama. He served the school as bursar-registrar and became its treasurer upon graduation. He also entered law practice in Tuscaloosa and

[19]The history of journalism as a business enterprise in Alabama remains to be written. Louis O. Brackeen, *History of the Alabama Press Association, 1871-1951* (Auburn, 1951) provides an introduction.

[20]See Margaret E. Armbrester, *John C. Persons: Citizen-Soldier* (Birmingham, 1974).

bought an interest in a lumber company. After distinguished service in World War I, he returned to Tuscaloosa, incorporated two new lumber companies, and became a loan officer for First National Bank of Tuscaloosa.

In 1927 he moved to Birmingham to join Traders National Bank, later merged to become American Traders National Bank, and later still (during the Great Depression) merged with First National Bank, Birmingham's largest financial institution. During those years he continually proved his business abilities. An officer in the Alabama National Guard, he commanded the 31st Division in combat during World War II. After the war, he became chief executive officer of First National and led that institution until his retirement in 1958.

Our fifth group consists of inductees born in the 1890s. Further evidence of the increasing importance of finance and banking to Alabama's twentieth-century development is the fact that four of these six, who represent the state's business leadership in the post-World War I period, built their reputations in banking and insurance. Two of them lived in Birmingham, another in Huntsville, and another in Dothan. The other two inductees are a Mobile transportation figure and a Tuscaloosa paper manufacturing executive.

Mervyn Hayden Sterne was born in Anniston but came to Birmingham in 1909 as a stenographer to the president of Traders National Bank. In 1916 he resigned from the bank and formed M. H. Sterne and Company, specializing in stocks and bonds. Service in France during World War I temporarily interrupted his business career, but upon his return to Birmingham he joined with former city mayor, George B. Ward, in the firm of Ward, Sterne, and Company, a dealer, underwriter, and distributor of securities offered by government and industry. Between 1926 and 1930 Sterne's firm played a key role in the series of mergers (mentioned earlier in connection with Persons' career) that joined Traders National Bank first with American Trust and Savings Bank and then with First National Bank. Rucker Agee and Edmond Leach also joined the firm, today known as Sterne, Agee, and Leach, Inc.

Sterne and his partners were pioneers in financing schools

through the issuance of three-mill tax school warrants. In the 1920s the firm purchased state-issued road bonds when no other bids were submitted and took the initiative in placing county road paving programs. Over the years Sterne's company and its syndicates have handled a substantially larger portion of the state's bonds than any other investment banking company.[21]

Sterne again served in the armed forces during World War II. His civic and charitable contributions were also numerous.

Frank Park Samford was another Birmingham financial figure. Samford, a native of Troy and a graduate of Auburn Polytechnic Institute, was the grandson of an Alabama governor and the son of a prominent Montgomery attorney. His early career included stints as an insurance salesman and as a farmer, but his life-long career really began in 1921 when he and his cousin, Robert P. Davison, took over the insolvent Heralds of Liberty, a fraternal benefit society, incorporated in Alabama but doing business from an office in Philadelphia. Samford and Davison were determined to move the firm to Birmingham and convert it to a legal reserve life insurance company. These were difficult objectives, demanding resolution of the society's complex affairs in Philadelphia, protection of existing policy holders, and development of agents qualified to sell regular life insurance. The move to Birmingham came in 1927. In early 1929 the firm became Liberty National Life Insurance Company, a legal reserve life insurance firm.[22]

The early 1930s were difficult years. In 1931 Samford persuaded company officers to sell industrial insurance (a term describing the collection of life and burial premiums in small, weekly payments) on a permanent basis. He developed pro-

[21]Ralph Draughon, "Some Aspects of the History of Alabam Bond Issues," *Alabama Review*, VI (July, 1953), 163-74, is a needed introduction to the subject. William H. Brantley, *Banking in Alabama, 1816-1860* (Birmingham, 1961) has no post Civil War counterpart, and a comprehensive financial history of Alabama remains to be written. For national context, see Vincent P. Carosso, *Investment Banking in America* (Cambridge, Mass., 1970) and Benjamin J. Klebaner, *Commercial Banking in the United States: A History* (Hinsdale, Ill., 1974).

[22]See Frank P. Samford, *The First Seventy-One Years of Liberty National Life Insurance Company* (Birmingham, 1971).

fessional well-trained agents capable of selling various types of insurance, and he devised a new type of contract to attract such agents. In 1933 the firm showed a profit and in 1934 Samford succeeded Davison as president, a post he held until 1960.

Samford's company became a $100 million company in 1941. Two years later Liberty National purchased Brown Service Insurance Company, a large firm specializing in burial insurance. This acquisition, probably the most important event in Liberty National's history, launched the firm's transition from a small combination company writing basic weekly and ordinary coverages to a large multi-line company engaged in ordinary, industrial, group, pension, trust, health, disability, income, hospital, and major medical coverages. In 1960 Liberty National became a $200 million company. By the time of Samford's death the firm was one of the twenty largest stock life insurance companies in the country.

Wallace David Malone, Sr., was educated in the Dothan public schools and at Sewanee Military Academy and The University of Alabama. In 1916 he enrolled in the Harvard School of Business Administration, but when the United States entered World War I, he volunteered for the Army and served in France. Upon his return to Dothan he became manager of the Dothan Guano Company. In 1932 he bought that firm's outstanding stock (controlling it until 1955) and soon became a cashier in the First National Bank, of which his father was president. In 1939 he succeeded his father as president and chairman of the board. He served as president for ten years, then and thereafter investing in various other enterprises and playing an active role in state politics.

Marion Beirne Spragins of Huntsville followed a career pattern similar to that of Malone. He was educated in private schools in Huntsville and in Wayne, Pennsylvania, and at The University of Alabama. He began his banking career as a bookkeeper in the First National Bank of Huntsville, of which both his grandfather and father had served as director and president. World War I interrupted his career; he was commissioned in the field artillery and served in France. In 1920 he became a director of the bank, serving in that capacity for

the next fifty-three years, almost one-half of the entire history of the bank. In 1935 he succeeded his father as president and held that post until 1963. Spragins was widely noted for his expertise as a banker, but his reputation in his native city was also founded upon his leading Huntsville's post World War II industrial expansion, particularly the development of the space industry.[23]

Another business leader important to the post World War II development of his city was Edward Aubert Roberts of Mobile. Robert's career echoes that of Pratt, Miller, Pizitz, McGowin, Persons, May, and Stern, who achieved much from humble beginnings. Roberts attended University Military School in Mobile and Auburn Polytechnic Institute, leaving the latter school to work for John Waterman, who in 1919 organized the Waterman Steamship Corporation.[24] Roberts was Waterman's first employee, working by day as a cargo checker and by night as a shipping clerk. After early struggles with a handful of ships to establish a record of reliability, the firm was designated the Federal government's sole operator at the port of Mobile in 1924. Three years later, Roberts became vice-president and opened the corporation's first branch office in Memphis.

The firm's big opportunity came in 1930. Under provisions of the Merchant Marine Act of 1928, designed to encourage the construction of modern carriers by offering subsidies in the form of "ocean mail contracts," Waterman purchased fourteen ships. The firm added other ships over the next several years and secured a number of exclusive contracts. In 1936 Waterman turned the presidency over to Roberts. By World War II, Roberts headed the largest privately owned steamship line in the nation. The port facilities developed by Waterman, Roberts, and others resulted in Mobile's having one of the greatest population increases in any city in the nation during World War II. Roberts played a prominent role in wartime ship production and after the war became the behind-the-scenes leader of Mobile's effort to accomodate growth.

[23]Studies of how Alabama's cities reacted to post World War II growth would be beneficial to growth policy questions currently facing the state.

[24]An economic history of the port of Mobile, to include firms such as the Waterman Steamship Corporation is needed.

In 1946 Roberts founded Southern Industries, a holding company controlling a diversified combination of operating companies. In 1953, when Roberts shifted his primary attention to Southern Industries by resigning as chairman of the Waterman corporation (he remained a director), the latter firm was an $80 million business. By 1964, when Roberts died, the assets of Southern Industries exceeded $28 million, compared to $1.9 million in 1946.

The final inductee born in the 1890's to be noted is the only woman thus far honored by the Alabama Business Hall of Fame. Mildred Westervelt Warner was born in New York but lived her early life in Indiana, where her father owned and operated a wrapping paper mill. In 1902 her father patented a machine that produced a paper bag that could be opened with a flick of the wrist and "would stand on its own bottom." The E-Z Opener Bag was the key to Herbert Westervelt's opening of additional bag factories in New York and Mexico. In 1915 Mildred Westervelt married Herbert D. Warner, a municipal judge, who joined her father's firm as secretary-treasurer. Mrs. Warner served as assistant to her father.

The firm established plants in Texas and Louisiana between 1912 and 1919. In the late 1920s following Mississippi River floods in 1922 and 1927, the Westervelt family sought a new site for consolidating their principal manufacturing facilities.. They selected Tuscaloosa on the Black Warrior River close to both timber and coal resources. The Tuscaloosa mill went into production in 1929 as Alabama's first modern paper manufacturer. The corporate name was changed to Gulf States Paper Corporation. Mildred Warner was executive vice president; in 1938 she succeeded her father as president. In less than ten years after the reorganization of the company and the move to Tuscaloosa Mrs. Warner had freed the company of debt. During World War II she brought professional forestry into the organization and afterwards led an expansion effort. By 1950 Gulf States Paper supplied almost one of every five grocery bags and sacks in the nation.[25]

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[25]See David C. Smith, *History of Papermaking in the United States (1691-1961)* (New York, 1970). There is no comprehensive history available of papermaking in Alabama.

Our final grouping consists only of James Craig Smith, the only business leader born in the twentieth century inducted into the Alabama Business Hall of Fame in its first five years. His experiences, however, generally paralleled those of the honorees born in the previous decade, with the exception of World War I, for which he was too young. Smith's mother was the daughter of B. B. Comer, whose career as governor of Alabama and founder of Avondale Mills has been previously noted. Smith, however, initially sought to be a journalist upon his graduation from Virginia Military Institute in 1925. After working briefly as a reporter for the Selma *Times-Journal*, he began his long career with Avondale Mills.

Governor Comer personally trained Smith in the tasks of weighing and grading cotton. Smith next became the firm's chief buyer, traveling through the South. He rose up the corporate ladder through a succession of offices, becoming president and treasurer in 1951 and holding those offices for nineteen years. He expanded and improved his company and became a national spokesperson for the textile industry. In the latter capacity he held a number of national offices in textile trade associations. During his presidency of Avondale Mills, company sales more than doubled, six new mills were constructed, and the firm became the world's largest producer of ticking and cotton carded and combed knitting yarns.

On reflection, studies of factors in business success and changing relative opportunity to attain it have tended to make the point that the opportunity to achieve business success (measured by corporate title) in "rags-to-riches" fashion was lessened in the twentieth century. Whereas native intelligence and ground-floor business opportunity made it possible for nineteenth-century figures to achieve rather dramatic success, family standing and advanced education have become prerequisites in the twentieth century.[26]

[26]See John G. Cawelti, *Apostles of the Self-Made Man* (Chicago, 1968); Richard M. Huber, *The American Idea of Success* (New York, 1971); William Miller, ed., *Men in Business: Essays in the History of Entrepreneurship* (Cambridge, Mass., 1952); C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite* (New York, 1957); Moses Rischin, ed., *The American Gospel of Success* (Chicago, 1965); Richard Weiss, *The American Myth of Success* (New York, 1969); and Irvin G. Wyllie, *The Self-Made Man in America* (New Brunswick, N.H., 1954).

The business careers of the twenty-six leaders here studied support in part that generalization. The earlier one of these leaders was born, the more likely that person's career was launched from a relatively inauspicious start. Shook born in 1872, is the first whose father could be said already to have achieved significant business success. Rushton's father became a business leader after Rushton was born (1876) but before the son became an adult. After about 1876 as a birthdate, the likelihood increases that an inductee was born into reasonably secure business circumstances. Bedsole (1881), Bidgood (1884), Persons (1888), May (1889), Sterne (1892), and Roberts (1898) had relatively little paternal business success to inherit, but the other ten inductees born after 1876 were born into established business families. This factor is particularly true of the seven whose careers were in finance, banking, insurance, and real estate. Even in these fields, however, each considerably advanced the status he inherited. To make the point of this paragraph is not — as is too often assumed — to state that each's success was circumstantial. Many have squandered an inheritance.

In searching for factors explaining success, investigators often probe origins, educational backgrounds, and similar characteristics of their subjects. Most of the businessmen honored by the Alabama Business Hall of Fame were native Alabamians (see Table 1) of rural and small-town backgrounds. The majority were college educated. All had early experience with work and responsibility; most briefly experienced with possible career choices. As a group, they were not visibly active in politics (Pratt, Comer, Henderson, and Malone being exceptions). Almost without exception, these leaders were affiliated with traditional organized religious groups.

Almost without exception, also, these business leaders were highly visible in civic and charitable endeavors. Indeed, these contributions probably played the greatest role in their public reputations and ultimate selection to the Alabama Business Hall of Fame, aside from their attaining success as businessmen.

In conclusion, the twenty-six business leaders herein surveyed represent a diverse group, but not excessively so. They

generally illustrate the culture from which they sprang: rural and small-town, progressively but moderately urban, oriented toward religion and family, educated in native institutions, concerned about their communities and their state and practicing a civic ethic in their willingness to devote time to public service, often in undramatic fashion. Luck played a part in the rise of many, but it was luck capitalized upon by diligence and vision. Only May could be described popularly as an "overnight success." Risk-taking apparently became less important over time as a success factor, but few, if any, of these leaders could be classified as excessively cautious businessmen. A few exhibited flamboyance but on the whole they were not in the forefront of public attention. Their social concern was applied traditionally, which now draws the criticism of the post 1960's perspective; it is difficult to guage the extent and effectiveness of behind-the-scenes activity on social issues.

One therefore may study these careers toward learning the "secret of success" with disappointing results. No encompassing fagic formula can be found other than the usual prescriptions: industry, initiative, perserverance, commitment and perceptive personal use of educational and other opportunities that arise. The lesson perhaps is less in debates over what created success (how much credit should be given to whom under what circumstances) or how to achieve it then in answering why these leaders are judged successful by their peers in viewing their careers in retrospect. The common denominator apart from position in business is demonstrated concern for a community broader than each's own business endeavors. The fact that characteristic looms large in the selection process is as much a comment on the values of the nominating committee as upon the careers of the leaders they honor.

A BETTER FATE! THE BRITISH WEST FLORIDA SEAL

by

Robert R. Rea

The widely scattered and woefully incomplete records of the colonial period of Alabama history are often a source of great frustration. It is, consequently, cause for real scholarly excitement when new or hitherto unnoticed evidence comes to light. It is particularly gratifying when the process of recovery involves a conjunction of interests among friends and fellow searchers with differing specialities, working in neighboring states.

A recent issue of *The Alabama Historical Quarterly* contained an article describing the official seal of British West Florida and noting the author's unsuccessful search for a surviving specimen of this curious historical artifact.[1] Shortly thereafter, through the good offices of Dr. Jack D. L. Holmes of Birmingham, I had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Don Sharp of Metairie, Louisiana, who had also searched widely, but in vain, for a copy of the seal. Happily, Mr. Sharp's association with the St. Tammany Historical Society led to information regarding an extant copy of the seal, and a picture of it was published in *The St. Tammany Historical Society Gazette*.[2] In March, 1981, I had the pleasure of visiting Mandeville, Louisiana, as a guest of the Society, and studying the seal which was formerly attached to a land grant issued to William O'Brien in 1776, and is now preserved in the parish archives. As the West Florida seal is known to Alabamians only by virtue of the sketch made by Benjamin Wailes and reproduced in Peter J. Hamilton's *Colonial Mobile* and Dunbar Rowland's *Mississippi Provincial Archives, 1763-1766, English Dominion*, a few comments based upon observation of the physical evidence may be appropriate.[3]

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[1]Robert R. Rea, "The Deputed Great Seal of British West Florida," *The Alabama Historical Quarterly*. XL (Nos. 3 & 4, Fall and Winter, 1978), 162-168.

[2]Vol. IV (March, 1980), 7.

[3]The author is most grateful to Mrs. Amos E. Neff for the privilege of studying the seal, and to Dr. S. Harvey Colvin, Jr., for the accompanying photographs.

The surviving seal measures four and one half inches (11.3 cm) in diameter and three quarters of an inch (1.3 cm) in thickness. The St. Tammany example retains the original paper covering the wax, both front and back, and is now light brown in color. The edges of this seal are badly worn, and roughly one eighth of the lower portion is missing — apparently broken off quite some time ago. The ribbon string which attached the seal to the document is in place, and an accompanying fragment of paper may be identified as a printed form issued at Pensacola.

The impression on the reverse or "royal" side of the seal is remarkably well preserved, sharp and legible; that on the obverse or "colonial" side is less distinct — only a few details are clear. In general, the St. Tammany seal verifies the accuracy of Wailes's work and suggests that he sketched from a well-preserved model. The flaws in his drawing (when checked against design descriptions, examples of other contemporary British colonial seals and the St. Tammany seal) are rather more technical than substantial.

The most noticeable differences appear on the reverse side of the seal. In reality, the crown is taller and more rounded than pictured by Wailes. The right foreleg of the lion is flexed upward, rather than downward; the base of the tail is thicker; the mane falls straighter, for the beast's posture is more erect. The unicorn appears slightly larger than in Wailes's drawing; it wears a collar, and its right rear leg is angled from the body quite differently.

The obverse face of the St. Tammany seal is disappointingly empty, save for the appropriate lettering and the vague representation of two trees on the far right of the intended scene. Both the motto and the identifying legend are quite clear. Assuming that the engraver did in fact inscribe a view of "a cultivated County interspersed with Vineyards and Corn Fields," his work must have been so shallow or so fine that it failed to make any significant impression when applied to the paper covering of the wax.

The St. Tammany seal provides clear evidence that the abbreviations in the legends on both sides of the seal were

properly separated by a dot or single stop centered in the line of lettering. Wailes's sketch is incomplete and incorrect in regard to this feature of the seal.

The discovery of one survivor of the British occupation of the Gulf Coast inspires hope that others may be found through the continuing efforts of interested parties.

WOMEN IN MEDICINE AND THE ISSUE IN LATE NINETEENTH-CENTURY ALABAMA*

by

Bill L. Weaver

and

James A. Thompson

The presence today of women in medical school classes, on hospital wards, and as fully-trained physicians is a fact that is often inadequately appreciated. For, in fact, a struggle was necessary to overcome the myopic vision and mistaken beliefs which pervaded in the United States in the nineteenth century regarding whether or not women were equipped for careers in medicine and thus whether they should be permitted to train for such careers. Although the arguments used for and against women as physicians were probably quite similar throughout the nation, it may be instructive to note how the issues were addressed at the state level, as well.

I. *Women in Medicine in the Nineteenth Century*

The nineteenth century was an era when the roles of women were clearly defined. Although these roles were ever undergoing modification — being far less restrictive at the end of the century than at the beginning — they were restrictive throughout the era and were, to a large extent, based on a misconception of the nature of women. Whether the misconception that appeared in medical literature and was supported in the medical community was developed and endorsed honestly or whether it was derived from a desire to maintain the exisiting social order — social control of women — remains an unanswered question.[1]

*The authors wish to acknowledge the assistance of Howard L. Holley, M.D., Anna Lois Waters, Professor of Rheumatology, School of Medicine, University of Alabama in Birmingham.

[1]Martha H. Verbrugge asserts that, "Influenced more by social norms than by scientific knowledge, medical theories reinforced America's ideology and uncertainty about true womanhood." "Women and Medicine in Nineteenth-Century America,"

During the nineteenth century some women in the United States sought to train themselves for more than hearth and home and to enter professions heretofore occupied primarily by men. The professions which women sought varied, but the responses by most of the male and much of the female population were uniform and predictably negative. Some women, especially in the mid- and late-nineteenth century, chose to enter the field of medicine — not tas midwifes as traditionally had been open to them but as physicians. No doubt some of these women receive moral reinforcement from the extant women's rights movement and its rebellion against the accepted view of women's place in society.[2] In addition to its assertion of every woman's right to enter her chosen profession, the women's rights movement insisted upon equal educational opportunities as a God-given right. It was consistent, therefore, with the spirit of the women's rights movement that women interested in medicine as a career seek admission to "regular" medical college,[3] institutions which subscribed to traditional training and, in keeping with that tradition, admitted men

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Signs I (Summer, 1976), 960. For a powerful contention of the social control interests of male physicians, see Ann D. Wood, " 'The Fashionable Diseases': Women's Complaints and Their Treatment in Nineteenth-Century America," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* (Summer, 1973); Regina Morantz, "The Lady and Her Physician," in Mary Hartman and Lois W. Banner, eds., *Clio's Consciousness Raised: New Perspectives on the History of Women* (New York, 1974); Linda Gordon, "Voluntary Motherhood: The Beginnings of the Feminist Birth Control Ideas in the United States," *Feminist Studies* I (Winter-Spring, 1973); Barbara Ehrenreich and Diedre English, *Complaints and Disorders: The Sexual Politics of Sickness* (Old Westbury, New York, 1973); Carroll Smith-Rosenberg and Charles E. Rosenberg, "The Female Animal: Medical and Biological Views of Woman and Her Role in Nineteenth-Century America," *Journal of American History* LX (September, 1973) 332-356.

The traditional interpretation is found in numerous locations, including J.B. Blake, "Women and Medicine in Ante-Bellum America," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* XXXIX (1965); Francis R. Packard, *History of Medicine in the United States,* (New York, 1963) II; and Kate Campbell Hurd-Mead, *Medical Women of America: A Short History of the Pioneer Medical Women in America and of a Few of Their Colleagues in England* (New York, 1933).

[2]For analyses of the woman's rights movement in the late nineteenth century, see: William L. O'Neill, *Everyone Was Brave: A History of Feminism in America* (Scranton, 1972); Eleanor Flexner, *Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1975); and Aileen Kraditor, *The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement* (Garden City, 1965).

[3]In the nineteenth century there were several types of "irregular" institutions — hemeopathic, eclectic, hydropathic, etc. — purporting to be medical schools.

primarily or exclusively. To feminists, the issue of admission of women to medical school was another test of the strength of the women's rights movement at large, and, unfortunately, their support probably contributed somewhat to the intensity of the opposition which women applicants faced.

In support of their requests for admission to medical schools and to the medical profession, women pointed with pride to their historic role as midwives, while emphasizing the importance of medical care of women *by* women if female modesty was to be respected and maintained. They insisted that they had played a crucial role as midwives in areas of the country without the services of physicians, but they sadly noted that, as medical schools began to offer training in obstetrics and gynecology, male physicians had increasingly restricted the activities of midwives, except in the remotest of geographical locations.[4]

Further, advocates of the admission of women to medical schools complained that Victorian standards of morals and modesty virtually prohibited nineteenth-century women from discussing their gynecological problems with and having them treated by male physicians.[5] It is safe to say, therefore, that many gynecological problems remained untreated largely because of female modesty. Because of the belief that many gynecological problems were preventable, the personal hygiene

[4]Interestingly, at the same time that they were seeking admission to medical schools in the United States, institutions were being established and programs developed in England to train British women exclusively as midwives. Jean Donnison, "Medical Women and Lady Midwives, A Case Study in Medical and Feminist Politics," *Women's Studies* III (1976), 230. In a sense, women in the United States were seeking comparable work to that planned for British midwives, but American female medical aspirants were not amenable to being restricted to midwife duties alone.

[5]There is abundant evidence that many women in the nineteenth century avoided medical attention for serious conditions or concealed much from male physicians because of embarrassment. See: Richard Harrison Shryock, "Women in Medicine," in his *Medicine in America: Historical Essays* (Baltimore, 1966); Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female Animal"; and Blake, "Women and Medicine in Ante-Bellum America," 102. Referring to conducting gynecological examinations of females, one nineteenth-century Alabama gynecologist alluded to female modesty when he said: "This can best and most satisfactorily be accomplished by anaesthetizing the patient, which overcomes any embarrassment, prevents pain and relaxes the abdominal muscles." Wyatt Heflin, "Recent Progress in Gynecology," *The Alabama Medical and Surgical Age* VI (August, 1894), 458.

movement had been founded in the 1840s, and, as an outgrowth of this movement, modifications in female diet, dress, and exercise had been initiated.[6] Also, the movement led to the formation of physiological societies to dispense medical information to women by women with recognized training in the field. The low calibre of men who went into medicine and their lack of sensitivity toward their female patients further convinced women of the need for female physicians.[7] With these needs firmly in mind, a few women sought to enter institutions to acquire medical training.

What a few women desirous of entering the medical profession believed themselves capable of doing and what the medical community — admittedly almost totally male — and most of the male and female population saw as their capabilities were at great variance in the nineteenth century. Although the first female student had been admitted to a "regular" medical school in the 1840s, progress throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century toward opening the doors of medical schools to qualified women was uneven at best.[8] There is apparently little evidence regarding the opinions of

[6]Contingent upon the expansion of women's knowledge about their anatomical and physiological make-up was the contention that better informed women would be able to minimize their gynecological problems and would be able to recognize their medical problems in earlier stages. Of course, the latter contention presumed that once women recognized their gynecological problems they would have the problems cared for by physicians, most of whom were male.

For a discussion of the female hygiene movement, see Richard H. Shryock, "Sylvester Graham and the Health Reform Movement, 1830-1870," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* XVIII (September, 1931), 172-83.

[7]During the mid-nineteenth century many states licensed physicians after only two terms of lectures and frequently at second-rate proprietary schools, at that. Shryock concludes that the low calibre of medical schools and the low calibre of students they attracted had a direct bearing on the "extraordinary boorishness displayed by some student groups toward the first women who attended hospital clinics." Shryock, "Women in Medicine," 188.

[8]Medical colleges opening their doors to women in the 1840s were: Geneva Medical College (New York), Northwestern University (Chicago) — though this decision was soon rescinded; in the 1850s, Western Reserve (Cleveland), Graefenberg Medical Institute (Alabama); in the 1860s, University of California, University of Michigan; in the 1870s, Syracuse University; in the 1890s, The Johns Hopkins University, Cornell University, and Tulane University. For brief descriptions of some — though not all — of these events, see: Elizabeth Bass, "Pioneer Women Doctors in the South," *Journal of the American Medical Women's Association* II (December, 1947), 557-58; John Duffy, *The Healers: The Rise of the Medical*

medical school administrators in the nineteenth century on the issue of the admission of female applicants.[9] However, much evidence regarding the opinions of physicians in general regarding the nature of women and the basic incompatibility of women with intellectual pursuits is available in the proceedings of medical society meetings and in various other items of the popular and scientific literature of the era.[10]

Physicians, troubled over the potential entrance of women into the medical profession, fought the movement by (1) derrogating "irregular" medical schools which had been receptive to women as students; (2) condemning newly-established female medical schools; and (3) utilizing scientific and pseudoscientific findings to explain why women were unsuited for medicine. Although a few male physicians were supportive of females as physicians, most certainly were not, and those who were supportive tended to be ostracized by the remainder of the medical brotherhood.[11]

In the nineteenth century, "irregular" medical schools, in need of funds and perhaps eager to attack "regular" medical schools, admitted women to their classes. These institutions were under constant attack from "regular" institutions because of their inadequate facilities and the poor training that they provided. Therefore, the fact that such dubious institutions

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Establishment (New York, 1976), 276-77; and Shryock, "Women in Medicine," 190.

A few southern women found their way northward to seek educational opportunities not available in the South, and a few northern women trained in the North migrated to the South and engaged in medical practice. The first southern woman to receive a degree from a southern school was Louisa Shepard, who received her degree from the Graefenberg Medical Institute, which had been founded in Dadeville, Alabama by her father in 1852. Bass, "Pioneer Women Doctors in the South," 557.

[9]If there are institutions that have in their archival collections correspondence of their deans in the nineteenth century, a fascinating study of the responses to womens' inquiries and applications could be carved out.

[10]Such works are described in Vern Bullough and Martha Voght, "Women, Menstruation, and Nineteenth Century Medicine," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* XLVII (January-February, 1973) and Smith-Rosenberg and Rosenberg, "The Female Animal."

[11]For example, those male physicians in Philadelphia who taught courses at Women's College found themselves left on the periphery of the Philadelphia medical community.

were receptive to women applicants provided little credence to women's contention that they should be admitted to "regular" medical schools. Medical societies excluded graduates of these "irregular" institutions, and thus the standing in the medical community of their graduates, male or female, remained low.

The hesitancy of all-male medical schools to admit women led to the estabilshment in the last half of the nineteenth century of medical schools exclusively for women.[12] Most of these schools were short-lived, lasting only until the all-male institutions began regularly to admit women. By the end of the century, with the need for these female institutions greatly diminished, all but one, Women's Medical College in Philadelphia, had vanished. Most male physicians considered graduates of women's medical schools to be inferior, and, as a result, protracted battles were fought in medical societies over whether graduates of female medical schools were eligible — and, no doubt, capable — of consultation in medical cases.[13] The medical community in the last half of the nineteenth century felt comfortable in destroying the credibility of "irregular" medical schools, but as the debates indicate, physicians were somewhat less comfortable in discrediting female medical colleges.

The most troubling aspect of the whole question of women in medicine, however, was yet to be resolved — the establishment of a sound basis upon which to refuse women admission to "regular" medical schools. According to the conventional wisdom of the era, medicine was no place for a lady, therefore,

[12]Medical schools exclusively for women were established in Philadelphia, Boston, Chicago, and New York. Altogether, nineteen schools were established between 1850 and 1895. By 1900, however, the only remaining female medical college was that in Philadelphia. Shryock, "Women in Medicine," 190; Duffy, *The Healers*, 276.

[13]The American Medical Association addressed the question of female membership for the first time in 1868, and this question was raised numerous times thereafter. In 1876, the AMA received, though with some misgivings, a female delegate from Illinois, but the national society did not admit women until 1915. Duffy, *The Healers*, 275. For a discussion of this issue, see Martin Kaufman, "The Admission of Women to Nineteenth-Century American Medical Societies," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* (Summer 1976) and Cora Bagley Marrett, "On the Evolution of Women's Medical Societies," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* LIII (Fall, 1979).

only a few male physicians felt the need to explain why women should be denied admission to medical schools and to the medical profession. Yet, physicians were under some self-imposed pressure for they were thought to be above petty jealousy. As a result, a few physicians thought it necessary to explain their opposition to women in medicine. To do so, they employed scientific and pseudoscientific arguments purporting to demonstrate that the confinement of women to hearth and home was appropriate and consistent with female anatomical and physiological capabilities. Historical opinions vary on the extent to which the scientific evidence was influenced by social conditions and on the extent to which those who used these "scientific" arguments knew them to be more descriptive of how things were than interpretive of how things ought to be.[14] Although there is little doubt that "scientific" results were tempered by the social milieu of the scientist, it is not clear, as some historians have argued, that the "scientific" treatises

[14]According to Smith-Rosenberg and Rosenberg, "would-be scientific arguments were used in the rationalization and legitimization of almost every aspect of Victorian life, and with particular vehemence in those areas in which social change implied stress in existing social arrangements." Thus, according to the same authors, "men hopeful of preserving existing social relationships, and in some cases threatened themselves both as individuals and as members of particular social groups, employed medical and biological arguments to rationalize traditional sex roles as rooted inevitably and irreversibly in the prescriptions of anatomy and physiology." Smith-Rosenberg and Rosenberg, "The Female Animal," 332-33. "When the belief structure of the physician is threatened," says Bullough and Voght, the physician "often uses his medical expertise to justify his prejudices and in the process strikes back with value laden responses which have nothing to do with scientific medicine." "In retrospect," continues these authors, "it does seem that the nineteenth century physician grew somewhat more shrill in his emphasis on the stability of the female at the very time that women and their male allies were challenging the old stereotpyes." Bullough and Voght, "Women, Menstruation," 66, 81.

There was, no doubt, an element of concern among male physicians over economic competition from women in the field. Shryock, "Women in Medicine," 187. For gynecologists this concern became more real as the first female physicians graduated, entered gynecology, and immediately attracted an overwhelming number of female patients. Kaufman points out that the vast majority of female physicians did specialize in gynecology and settled in cities. Kaufman, "Admission of Women," 257.

No doubt, social inertia played its part. Physicians had always been men, and men and women alike experienced considerable difficulty in adjusting to the idea of female physicians. According to Kaufman, in opposing the entrance of women into medical societies, male physicians emphasized the social aspects of medical societies and insisted that members ought to be able to determine their social companions. Kaufman, "Admission of Women," 253.

about women in the nineteenth century were prepared as a further means of controlling female victims by male oppressors.[15] Although the preponderance of male physicians opposed the entry of women into medicine, it is worth noting that the women's cause was supported by a few male physicians.

II. *The Issue in Alabama in the Late Nineteenth Century*

The medical community of the state of Alabama in the late nineteenth century faced the issue in much the same way as medical communities in other states. Between 1870 and 1900 the issue of medical training for women was specifically addressed four times at the annual meeting of the Medical Society of the State of Alabama. Three of the speakers, Drs. Job S. Weatherly, Benjamin Hogan Riggs, and Paul DeLacy Baker, were predictably opposed to women in medicine, but one, Dr. Ruffin Coleman, favored the higher training of females for medicine and other professions.

Job Sobieski Weatherly was born in 1828 in Bennettsville, South Carolina.[16] He "read" medicine under Dr. Alexander McLeod at Bennettsville, but, after two years of study, he went to New York, where he became a private pupil of Dr. P.A. Aylett and a student in the medical department of the University of New York. Weatherly completed his medical training in 1849 and returned to the South, engaging in medical practice in Adairsville and later Palmetto, Georgia.

Weatherly's Alabama career began in 1857 with his move to Montgomery. In 1862 he accepted an assignment placing him in charge of the Confederate Army hospital in Shiloh. Soon after his return to Montgomery, he was appointed medical purveyor of the department of the Mississippi. He was later

[15]For a discussion of male physician/female patient relationships, see Smith-Rosenberg, "The Hysterical Woman: Sex Roles and Role Conflict in 19th Century America," *Social Research* XXXIX (Winter, 1972) and previously mentioned articles by Wood, Morantz, and Gordon. We're inclined to agree with Verbrugge who admits that sexual oppression has been a powerful factor in medicine and society but argues that to see it as the primary force oversimplifies history. "Women and Medicine in Nineteenth-Century America," 961.

[16]Emmett B. Carmichael, "Job Sobieski Weatherly," *Journal of the Medical Association of Alabama,* XXXIII (May, 1964), 340-43; Thomas McAdory Owen, *History of Alabama and Dictionary of Alabama Biography* (Chicago, 1921), IV 1735-36.

assigned to Savannah, Georgia, but resigned due to illness in the family and return to Montgomery.

His medical activities in Montgomery involved private practice and an enduring interest in local, state, and national medical organizations. He was one of the organizers of the Montgomery Medical and Surgical Society in 1866 and served three terms as president of that organization. Weatherly was instrumental in reactivating the Medical Association of the State of Alabama, which had been suspended during the Civil War. The Montgomery physician served in several capacities in that organization. He was one of the first representatives from southern states to serve as a delegate to the American Medical Association meeting after the Civil War. Only two years after the return of southern representation to the A.M.A., Weatherly was elected as its vice president. Ironically, in 1871 Weatherly presided at an A.M.A. session in which the issue of female membership in the organization was hotly debated. His long and illustrious medical career came to an end in 1891 with his death at the age of sixty-two.

Benjamin Hogan Riggs was born at Mobile in 1838, but his family moved to Selma in 1845.[17] He was educated at Barton Academy, at the completion of which he studied medicine in the office of two Selma physicians, Drs. A.G. Mabry and James Kent. This study was followed by attendance at lectures at the University of Louisiana in New Orleans and at the Mobile Marine Hospital. Riggs received his medical degree from the University of Pennsylvania in 1859. He was engaged briefly in practice in Wilcox County, but with the outbreak of hostilities, he entered the Confederate Army, rising to senior surgeon of his brigade in the Army of Tennessee. At the close of the war, Riggs returned to Selma where he practiced medicine until his untimely death in 1888 at the age of forty-nine. He served as president of the State Medical Society in 1884.

Paul DeLacy Baker was born in Abbeville District, South Carolina in 1829.[18] Little is known of his education beyond

[17]Owen, *History and Dictionary,* IV, 1439; T.A. DeLand and A. Davis Smith, *Northern Alabama, Historical and Biographical, Illustrated* (Chicago, 1881), 681-82.
[18]"The Grand Roll of Honor," Department of Archives and History of the State of Alabama, Montgomery, Alabama.

the fact that he received his medical degree at the Medical College of Georgia in 1854. His whereabouts between 1854 and 1862, when he entered the Confederate Army, is unclear. He served as a surgeon in the C.S.A. until the end of the war, and he entered private practice in Eufaula. His medical association activities included the presidency of the Barbour County Medical Society, Counselor of the State Medical Association, and Orator at the State Medical Association meeting in 1880.

Little is known of the early life of Ruffin Coleman, other than the fact that he received his medical degree from the University of Nashville and Vanderbilt University in 1869. He began his Alabama medical practice in 1875 in Athens, where he remained for three years. In 1878 or 1879 he left Athens and moved to Holly Springs, Mississippi, and apparently from there to Clarksville, Mississippi, returning to Alabama in 1888. Coleman practiced in Birmingham until 1892, when he apparently left the state.[19]

Alabama physicians who opposed female higher education and entrance into medicine did so by expressing concern over: (1) attempts by women to abandon their "natural sphere" in pursuit of learning and seek a career in another; (2) the loss of women's moral influence and the corruption of them by participation in the rough-and-tumble activities of society; (3) the disastrous effects which women's competition in the work place would have upon their modesty, gentility, and femininity; (4) the strain which entrance into higher learning and the professions would place on women's mental, physical, and emotional capabilities; (5) the damaging effect which women's competition in society would have on the benevolent desire of men to protect them; and (6) the undue influence of the women's rights movement that thrust women into a competitive field which they had had no historical interest in entering.

By nature, according to much of the thinking in the nineteenth century, women were fitted for domestic activities involving home and family, and it was a violation of that "natural" tendency if they chose a professional career. Further-

[19] *Transactions of the Medical Society of the State of Alabama* (1875-1899).

more, these "natural" characteristics were thought to have a deeply-rooted biological basis.[20] In fact, this may not have been so much the way women were as the way men wanted them to be. And if it was the way most of them were, it may have been more the result of an indoctrination process than a "natural" tendency.[21]

Concern for women's appropriate sphere was evident in Alabama. In 1870, in a florid oration and apparently with reference to the physicians' wives in the audience, Dr. George A. Ketchum, President of the Alabama Medical College at Mobile, complimented women who, "*acting in their own prescribed sphere,* [italics ours] and employing the agencies suited to the delicacy and capabilities of their sex," did much to brighten scientific meetings.[22] It is, of course, quite possible that no sort of limitation on women was intended by his choice of words, though the implication is there. Only two years later, speaking before the same group, Dr. J.S. Weatherly questioned any role for women which took them out of the home. Insisting that any woman entering the field as a general practitioner was going beyond her sphere, he asked: "Can a practitioner of medicine fulfill her duties as wife and mother . . . ?" He added that he believed no woman to be fulfilling her destiny who is not a wife and a mother.[23] Somewhat later, Dr. Ben-

[20]The literature on the inherent weakness of women is absolutely overwhelming. In addition to the bibliographies of previously mentioned articles, see John S. Haller, Jr., and Robin M. Haller, *The Physician and Sexuality in Victorian America* (Urbana, 1974). Smith-Rosenberg and Rosenberg point out that late nineteenth-century women physicians failed to share the alarm of their male colleagues when contemplating the damages of coeducation. "No one . . . worked harder or in unhealthier conditions than the washerwomen; yet, would-be saviours of American womanhood did not inveigh against this abuse — washing, after all, was appropriate work for woman." Smith-Rosenberg and Rosenberg," "The Female Animal," 342.

John Duffy has noted numerous concerns over the damaging effect of mental strain on females' physical condition. Duffy, "Mental Strain and 'Overpressure' in the Schools: A Nineteenth Century Viewpoint," *Journal of thte History of Medicine* XXIII (January, 1968), 72-74.

[21]See, Duffy, "Mental Strain," 63-79. Witness, for example, the woman on the frontier who filled a role quite unlike that portrayed in nineteenth-century popular literature and yet maintained her maternal instincts and her sexual identity.

[22]George A. Ketchum, Annual Oration, *Transactions of the Medical Society of the State of Alabama* (1870), 213-214.

[23]J.S. Weatherly, "Woman: Her Rights and Her Wrongs," *Transactions of the Medical Society of the State of Alabama* (1872), 68.

jamin Hogan Riggs observed that civilization had invested the female with "peculiar sanctity, and lovingly contemplates her as the mother and mistress of the house," adding, "that civilization which confines woman to the home circle and the church is the best and highest."[24] The import of women's departure from their "natural" sphere was addressed by Dr. Paul DeLacy Baker, who expressed a grave fear that admission of women to the field of medicine would become, in his words, "the gateway through which the exodus will pass out into highways and byways which lead to the ultimate *decensus Averni.*"[25] A woman's place, he contended, involves laws of nature which can never be violated with impunity. Woman was, therefore, "as perfect in her sphere as man . . . in his," but out of it, either one is "a failure and a monstrosity." In the final analysis, it was argued, woman should remain in her "sphere," having due regard as she should, "to her destiny and the proper relation which she should sustain to society and home."

Dr. Ruffin Coleman saw the issue quite differently. The slavery of women to purely domestic duties and the near-worship of females, he noted, had fostered generations of housewives and social queens in the South, but with environments changed, women had to become more active as breadwinners.[26] No longer could the post-Civil War South afford to maintain the Southern woman on a pedestal. Domestic activities would continue to be expected of the Southern woman and, according to this physician, there was no reason why female mental development should prevent women from engaging in domestic activities. On the contrary, one domestic activity — the rearing of children — would be enhanced by the educated woman's opportunity of passing her culture on to her children. The influence which women had over their children and, to some extent, their husbands, provided further evidence of their need to develop themselves to their highest mental and physical capabilities.

[24]Benjamin Hogan Riggs, "The New Era in Medicine," *Transactions of the Medical Society of the State of Alabama* (1878), 174-75.

[25]The phrase means descent into Hell. Paul Delacy Baker, "Shall Women Be Admitted Into the Medical Profession?" *Transactions of the Medical Society of the State of Alabama* (1880), 193.

[26]Ruffin Coleman, "Woman's Relations to the Higher Education and Professions, As Viewed From Physiological and Other Stand-Points," *Transactions of the Medical Society of the State of Alabama* (1889), 242-44.

The contention that if women entered professions they would lose their moral influence in the world and would be corrupted in the process proved to be a powerful one. For example, Dr. Weatherly, though highly complimentary of women's moral stature, expressed concern over the likelihood that the medical woman's moral principles would be compromised and suggested that abortions would increase significantly because female doctors could not resist the appeals of fallen sisters.[27] This situation was only one of many compromising situations and corrupting influences which the female would encounter when she left the home and entered a profession.

The nineteenth century was, as one historian has observed, "a romantic and sentimental age, when every effort was made to render women as distinctively feminine as possible."[28] Certainly women's literature in the nineteenth century was replete with emphasis on feminity, subserviency, dependency, and sweetness.[29] There was the fear, voiced by some men, that if women studied medicine, "it would destroy those admirable qualities for which they were loved and honored."[30] And, it was a contention advanced by some opponents of women in professional fields that the woman in pursuit of higher education and a professional career would lose her feminity and would develop all of the manly characteristics, except those most needed — rational thinking and physical strength. Dr. Weatherly, pointing to the desirability of women remaining within the confines of traditional womanhood, insisted that a woman's strength was in her womanhood and proudly observed that Southern women were "the purest type of woman upon the face of the globe."[31] Emphasizing the importance of woman placing true womanhood first in their lives, he observed that "strong-minded women of history have their memories respected and loved more for their womanly failings than for their manly acts." Dr. Baker assessed women's entry into a professional career more harshly and warned that

[27]Weatherly, "Woman: Her Rights and Her Wrongs," 78.

[28]Shryock, "Women in Medicine," 183.

[29]Barbara Welter, in an investigation of early nineteenth-century women's magazines, found the components of "true womanhood" to be piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity. "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," *American Quarterly* XVIII (Summer, 1966), 152.

[30]Blake, "Women and Medicine in Ante-Bellum America," 120.

[31]Weatherly, "Woman: Her Rights and Her Wrongs," 70.

> just so far as a woman advances into the masculine vocation, just that far must she leave behind her her feminine nature, and men, meeting her as a competitor in the business and the struggles of life, cease to regard her as a woman; for, in effect, she has ceased to be such. In attempting to ape his qualities, she has lost her own. She has unsexed herself . . . [thus becoming] an intellectual and moral hermaphrodite.[32]

As he saw it, intellectuality among women naturally detracted from feminity.

In presenting a different view Dr. Coleman denigrated brute strength as important to success, observing that Alexander Pope was no Hercules, George Washington no miracle of strength, and the revered Alexander Stephens an "emaciated dwarf."[33] The same physician refuted the contention that the admission of women into the medical profession would assure women of "brutalizing physiques" an argument which he said was contrived to frighten the ladies themselves. To the contrary, he asserted:

> I do not appreciate that one hair's breadth of this fairness will be yielded by a little wholesome labor, or a little mental elevation. I have yet to see a lady, less a lady for earning money; she forfeits not a whit of esteem, but rather gains in worthiness by earning a state of independence and self-support instead of dangling as a pensioner upon another's bounty. Such a woman must carry herself with a self-respect that no sneer can cover, or rusty dress conceal. To equal man, she need not ape him, nor necessarily grow manish [*sic*].

The loss of female modesty and gentility was no less important to those who were concerned over maintenance of the nineteenth-century woman as she was. The woman in medicine, according to some opponents, would witness and become involved in scenes destructive to her modesty, gentility, and virtue. Because women had exalted female modesty and gen-

[32]Baker, "Shall Women Be Admitted," 198-99.
[33]Coleman, "Woman's Relations," 239, 241.

tility as part of their plea for the admission of females into gynecological training, they had made themselves vulnerable to the use of female modesty and delicacy as a reason for excluding women from the medical profession. Admitting that female gentility had its place in medicine, a woman's place in the sick chamber was identified as that of nurse, not doctor, because there was, as Dr. Weatherly put it, "an indescribably [*sic*] something about a woman as nurse, that is as far superior to man as Heaven is to earth."[34] Stated another way, suffering humanity had benefitted much more from Florence Nightingale as a gentle and ministering angel than it would have had she gone to them with probe and scalpel. Not only did society need the beneficial trait of female gentility, but the woman's family had similar needs. The woman who cast aside her feminity and gentility in order to enter a professional field was depriving herself and her potential off-spring of her special maternal skills and opportunities.

Conventional wisdom in the last half of the nineteenth century was that women were ill-suited to the rigors of medical training and practice. They were pictured as physically incapable of enduring the difficulties of medical education, and, even more importantly, as emotionally incapable of handling the pressures associated with medicine.[35] To illustrate these female limitations, a thorough explanation — in many cases, misexplanation — of the female anatomical and physiological make-up was undertaken. As one historian has perceptively pointed out, female physical weakness, epitomized by the sickly, frail woman periodically incapacitated by menstruation, was a condition that women were unable to deny,[36] although they blamed much of it on the fact that modesty prevented them from having female medical problems treated by male physicians.

A powerful argument utilized in the late nineteenth cen-

[34]Weatherly, "Woman: Her Rights and Her Wrongs," 77.

[35]Smith-Rosenberg and Rosenberg, "The Female Animal," 334. The prevalence of neurasthenia among women provided further evidence that women were inadequately equipped emotionally to deal with new roles for them in society. For a discussion of the problem of neurasthenia, see Haller and Haller, *The Physician and Sexuality in Victorian America.*

[36]For a fascinating description of this condition, see Smith-Rosenberg and Rosenbegr, "The Female Animal," 334-42.

tury as a justification for denying a rigorous higher education to women involved physiological maturation of women and the effect of mental exertion on the maturation process. In the view of many male physicians, women were essentially prisoners of their reproductive system, though there is some disagreement as to whether they were expected to look upon that system as anything more than a mechanism for procreation.[37] In some of the medical literature and in some of the marital advice books in the last half of the nineteenth century, the anatomical and physiological composition of females was explained, and implications of the composition were described. The uterus, according to those sources, was connected to the central nervous system, and shocks to the nervous system were believed to alter the reproductive cycle and the attendant emotional states.[38] It was not surprising, therefore, that around 1870 several medical writers proclaimed the hazards of education to the health of women, insisting that education for women was a serious mistake because it would be acquired simultaneously with the physiological strains of female puberty and ovulation.[39] According to these medical writers, the female

[37]It has been a standard interpretation for several years that the Victorian conception of women's sexuality was such that women were taught to be afraid of sex and to display an absolute lack of passion. Although there is much evidence to support the contention that nineteenth-century women were devoid of sexual feelings and drives, Carl Degler has presented formidable evidence to the contrary. Degler concludes that "the so-called Victorian conception of women's sexuality was more that an ideology seeking to be established than the prevalent law or practice . . ." He adds that: "historians need to recognize that the attitudes of ordinary people are quite capable of resisting efforts to reshape or alter them. That there was an effort to deny women's sexual feelings and to deny them legitimate expression cannot be doubted in the light of the books written then and later about the Victorian conception of sexuality." But the writings to the contrary cast doubt on the belief that the ideology was actually put into practice by most men and women in the nineteenth century. Degler, "What Ought To Be and What Was: Women's Sexuality in the Nineteenth Century," *American History Review* LXXIX (December, 1974), 1471, 1490; also see Peter Gay, "Victorian Sexuality: Old Texts and New Insights," *American Scholar,* XLIX (Summer, 1980), 372-78.

Much insightful discussion of this issue can be found in Haller and Haller, *The Physician and Sexuality in Victorian America* and in Ronald G. Walters, *Primers for Prudery: Sexual Advice to Victorian America* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1974).

[38]Smith-Rosenberg and Rosenberg, "The Female Animal," 335.

[39]The most popular of these writers, according to Bullough and Voght, was Edward H. Clarke, a Harvard professor who wrote *Sex in Education, or a Fair Chance for Girls.* Although there were those who refuted Clarke's work, the popularity of

body could not carry on two major functions simultaneosuly. Therefore, during the period of development of the reproductive system no other major function, such as mental concentration, should be attempted. In other words, "the girl who curtailed brain work during puberty could devote her body's full energy to the optimum development of its reproductive capacities," while the young woman who "consumed her vital force in intellectual activities was necessarily diverting these energies from the achievement of true womanhood."[40] Not only would woman's mental exertion and the attendant inadequately developed reproductive system cause her to produce defective children, but an imperfectly developed reproductive system would interfere with the development of the feminine character, leaving the educated woman without what one historian has called "a sufficiently feminine frame of mind."[41]

In Alabama, as elsewhere in the late nineteenth century, female mental, physical, and emotional capabilities were at issue, although most physicians did not publicly admit that they thought women to be mentally incapable of obtaining a higher education and entering a professional career as a physician. Dr. Weatherly, though giving token support to intellectual equality of the sexes, qualified his statement by adding that any inequality which existed could be attributed to the "physical formation of woman and to other natural causes, such as occupation, maternity, etc."[42] Dr. Baker somewhat hesitatingly admitted the "possibility" that women had intellectual equality with men but was careful to point out that "the faculties of the female intellect seem rather [better] adapted to the investigation of metaphysical than physical science," adding that "for judicial impartiality [;] for cold, impassive observations; for simple, calm intelligence; for unremitting and exhaustive exploration, the female mind seems comparatively unfitted."[43] Even less willing to accept women as intellectual equals, Dr. Riggs pointed

his book is indicated by the fact that it went through seventeen editions in thirteen years. Bullough and Voght, "Women, Menstruation," 69.

[40]Smith-Rosenberg and Rosenberg, "The Female Animal," 340.

[41]Bullough and Voght, "Women, Menstruation," 73. It was apparent of little significance to opponents of women in medical school that a report released in 1885 by the Massachusetts Labor Bureau indicated that there were no marked differences in health between college women and the national average.

[42]Weatherly, "Woman: Her Rights and Her Wrongs," 66.

[43]Baker, "Shall Women Be Admitted," 199-200.

out that the success of some famous female practitioners did not indicate that women were especially fitted for doctorate level training. Instead, he insisted, only at long and irregular intervals in the world's history had the female mind displayed a strength of masculine intensity.[44] Proponents of higher education for females could not accept the idea of inherent female intellectual weakness, though they did agree that women were more dependent than men upon intuition and emotions. Dr. Coleman sympathetically described women's decision-making machinery as "instantaneous logic, with man's cumbersome machinery of premise and syllogism omitted."[45] Continuing, the Birmingham physician insisted that the achievements of women in the past revealed "a glorious array of illustrious women in every walk of life that brands the imputation of her imbecility as a vile slander." Yet the common educational training in the nineteenth century, preparing women for domestic activities, constituted "a dish of intellectual pabulum that would more fit the brain of a chicken." In fact, the stifling of woman's mental development allegedly resulted in a prevalence of disorders of the nervous system. "For one case of breakdown from overwork among women," Coleman proclaimed, "there are a score from ennui and sheer inanition of doing nothing."[46]

It was of considerable concern to some men that nineteenth-century women were inadequately trained to rely on themselves if something should happen to the husband or father or both. "Is it not better," Coleman asked, "to train them to a noble self-reliance than to leave them to lean at chance upon any broken reed that is offered?"[47] Most Alabama physicians probably agreed with Dr. Baker who closed the issue by admitting that really

> the question is not whether woman has sufficient in-

[44]Riggs, "The New Era in Medicine," 174.

[45]Coleman, "Woman's Relations," 244. In medicine, he mentions the success of Drs. Mary Putnam Jacobi and Grace Peckham.

[46]*Ibid.*

[47]"After creation's lords have selected the best of creation's ladies, there is still a dreary residue that are left either to go through the unwomanly act of earning a livelihood, or the womanly act of perishing . . . . It is a cruel respect that demands of a woman to starve merely for conformity to a false standard of feminine deportment established by society under circumstances and environments entirely at variance with the condition that confronts woman to-day." *Ibid.*, 242-43.

> tellect to be a learned and skilled doctor, but whether she ought to so employ it; whether, as a *woman*, she and the *world* can afford to so dedicate it . . . .[48]

Obviously, it was not easy for male physicians to buttress their arguments with evidence of female intellectual weakness, although is was much easier for them to document and feel comfortable with their documentation on female physical frailties. In fact, they could do so in a paternalistic fashion of protecting women from the rigors of life in the professional world. Insisting that "Nature has fitted them more especially for patients than it has for doctors," Weatherly utilized a common argument for the era in stating that:

> It is a well known physiological law that for near half the time, say from ten to fifteen days out of thirty, females are subject to nervous depression or excitation, in a greater or lesser degree, and over which they absolutely have no control, frequently unfitting them for any pursuit requiring bodily or mental toil.[49]

Similarly, Dr. Baker viewed the entrance of a woman into the medical profession as physically antagonizing the intents of her creation, adding

> that the body of woman is as definitely marked for the first care of her child as is her mind. Its rounded outline and its velvet softness tell us only of gentleness, sympathy, delicacy, and tenderness; of all those heaven-inspired qualities that fit her for the inseparable companionship of that infantile helplessness which God deemed it unnecessary to command that she should love and cherish.[50]

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[48]"If the mere intellectuality of woman could be separated from her physical infirmities, and the demand which nature and her God-appointed destiny continually make upon her organization and *time,* it might be sufficient to enable her to master the scientific difficulties of our profession, or of any other; while, in ours especially, her gentle hand and her sympathetic nature might permit her to excel in all the qualifications of the healer, *particularly in such as involve the nurse.*" [Italics ours] Baker, "Shall Women Be Admitted," 200.

[49]Weatherly, "Woman: Her Rights and Her Wrongs," 72.

[50]Baker, "Shall Women Be Admitted," 195.

"It is impossible," he continued, "for such a physical structure to indicate that fierceness and persistence which the hardships and dangers of the exterior world demand." Referring to the physical endurance and the emotional stress associated with a scientific education and medical practice, the same physician asked:

> How can her delicate physical sensibilities, intensified by constant agumentations, endure the trials to which they must be subjected in the dissecting room? How often would the scalpel, in her silken hand, be the trembling index of her sweet ineptitude, and the blush of modesty write its interdict upon her tingling cheek?

While opponents of women in the higher professions had focused on women's physical weakness and the debilitating effects of intense mental and physical activity, proponents no doubt agreed with Dr. Coleman who suggested that "any change from the present state of woman's health and vigor would be an improvement devoutly to be wished."[51] This poor health, he concluded, could not be "laid at the door of violent brain culture."[52]

[51]Of the former, Coleman said that "the amount of exercise indulged in by most of our women, especially in the South, is about equal to that of the model woman described by Socrates, who filled her desires in this direction by folding up and putting away her clothes." Of the latter, he added, " 'So cribbed, cabined, and confined,' with attenuated waist, and contorted feet, our noble Anglo Saxon women are growing more and more a prey to all the ills that flesh is heir to. Why whoever saw a lady run — the very idea is a sacrilege. And even when children, how stands the case? While the boy pursues the flying ball, chases the hoop, or scours the plain, the tender ship of a sister is berigged in ribbons, flounces and things, and put in the straight jacket of ponderous decorum and inactivity." Coleman "Woman's Relations," 236-37.

[52]M.W. Due, M.D., of Birmingham, viewed the poor health of women as largely the result of inadequate exercise and cramping style of clothes. He quoted a comment which appeared in a New York medical journal in which a visitor to the South from the North had expressed concern over the weakly and sickly condition of southern women. Due laments the structures on female activity, observing that "while yet a child she romps and plays, and is a boy so far as outdoor amusements is concerned, until the catamenial flow begins. Then she becomes shy, modest, and no longer indulges in or enjoys her former amusements. She is no longer the same being. She begins to think of dress and her mind is filled with her looks and incipient thoughts of marriage. Her physical education is entirely neglected just at the state when exercise is necessary to help nature produce a

The emotional incapacity of women for medical careers was separated neatly from their mental capabilities, though it was intricately tied to their physical frailties. Female thinking, opponents were fond of saying, was more strongly influenced by emotions than by logic. Hysteria was reputed to be second nature to women, and their ability to handle stress was certainly dubious. "In the presence of the grim monster," observed Dr. Weatherly, ". . . there is no time for hysteria, and a nervous spell on the part of the physician might be fatal to the patient."[53] In the eyes of most Alabama physicians in the late nineteenth century, women were physically and emotionally ill-equipped to become physicians, and their intellectual capability, though not necessarily inferior to men's was directed more toward social and maternal than scientific pursuits.

In the late nineteenth century, part of the accoutrements of woman's "natural" sphere was the acceptance of women on pedestals as objects of near worship to be protected and supported by men. It was a widespread belief that, as Weatherly phrased it, it was every man's duty to support one woman. It is not surprising, therefore, that some people were concerned when woman's occupational competition with men appeared to be succeeding in "driving away from man's heart that innate feeling of chivalric sentiment which most men feel for her."[54] Women were urged to "be forever the help-mate and somewhat dependent companion of man," a position with which most nineteenth-century men felt comfortable.[55] Why should a man desire to exist, asked Dr. Riggs plaintively, "if deprived of the assurance that the life-sustaining contrasts of woman's nature to his own shall be preserved?"[56] He added the touching but unheeded plea, "Oh woman, queen of our hearts, be con-

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perfect specimen." Due, "On the Physical Education of the Fair Sex," *The Alabama Medical and Surgical Age* II (September, 1890), 421.

[53]Weatherly, "Woman: Her Rights and Her Wrongs," 74-75. In fact, Weatherly was dubious of woman's ability to separate emotional responses from rational judgment — even involving so serious a subject as infanticide — especially in the face of emotional appeals by other women.

[54]*Ibid.*, 68. Using only slightly different phrasing, another Alabama physician insisted that a professional career in competition with men would "impair the instinct of the manly heart to use his strength to defend her weakness." Baker, "Shall Women Be Admitted," 204.

[55]Riggs, "The New Era in Medicine," 174.

[56]*Ibid.*

tent with thy domain there!" As if enough had not been said already, the woman who shunned the helpmate and dependent status in favor of a career was assailed for allegedly contributing to her husband's debilitation by providing financial support that enabled him to be idle and leisurely.[57]

Surprisingly, some Alabama physicians, and perhaps many elsewhere as well, were oblivious to the hesitancy to admit women into professional fields and enigmatically argued that if women had been truly interested in becoming physicians they would have already done so. Presumably, the thrust of this argument — though it was not so stated — was that women were being unduly influenced by the women's rights movement.[58] Dr. Weatherly incredulously commented that there had been no laws prohibiting woman from studying medicine, "certainly none prohibiting her from preparing herself to practice upon her own sex," and as proof of this statement, he said that physicians were "large-minded men" who would not "entertain an unfounded prejudices for or against anything without good reason."[59]

During the last half of the nineteenth century Alabama witnessed the formation or continuation of five medical schools. The Medical College of Alabama, founded in 1859 and located at Mobile, continued there until 1920 when it was moved to Tuscaloosa and then ultimately to Birmingham in 1945 as the University of Alabama School of Medicine. The Medical Department at Southern University was founded in 1872 at Greensboro, where it remained throughout its eight-year existence. The Graffenberg Institute (1862-72) was founded at Dadeville, and it has the distinction of graduating the first female physician in the South. In 1894 the Birmingham Medical College was founded in the city of the same name, and it was still in existence at the turn of the century. The Montezuma Medical College, located at Bessemer, enjoyed only a two-year existence (1896-98).[60] No records of any of these

[57]*Ibid.*, 175.

[58]Weatherly alluded to this issue in, "Woman: Her Rights and Her Wrongs," 69-70.

[59]*Ibid.*, 73.

[60]James A. Thompson and Michael R. Kronenfeld, "The Montezuma Medical College," *The Alabama Journal of Medical Sciences* XVI (January, 1979), 67-68; Valadimir Luketic, "The Birmingham Medical College," *The Alabama Journal of*

institutions during the nineteenth century remain, and whether women applied for admission or wrote letters of inquiry concerning admission remains a mystery. Unfortunately, the absence of records of these institutions precludes the historian from assessing the extent to which ideas and attitudes expressed in medical society meetings are reflective of the attitudes of medical school administrators.

Unfortunately for women in Alabama, as well as for those throughout the United States, few people advocated the entrance of women into the medical profession, least of all male doctors. Obviously some breakthroughs had occurred by the turn of the century, but Abraham Flexner in his report in 1910 was wrong when he said, "medical education is open to women on practically the same terms as men and that so many institutions admit women that no woman desiring an education in medicine is under any disability in finding a school to which she may gain admittance."[61] Under this misapprehension, it was easy for him to conclude incorrectly that the absence of increased numbers of women in medical schools was an indication of their disinclination to enter medicine. He was under the illusion that there was no longer a need for a female medical school and recommended that funding for it be terminated. Nevertheless, he did express concern that women were not being given equal intern privileges to those of men.

For decades after his now-famous report was released, the accessibility of medical schools to women which Flexner had perceived in 1910 proved to be erroneous. The admission of women to medical schools was a giant step in rising above the contention that not only was there a "natural" sphere in society for women, but that it was "natural" for *all* women. Giant steps must be taken slowly, and in medicine as in the child's game, only then after saying "May I?"

Medical Sciences VI (October, 1969) 447-454; James A. Thompson and Michael R. Kronenfeld, "The Southern University Medical College," *The Alabama Journal of Medical Sciences* XVI (July, 1979), 198-200; James A. Thompson and Michael R. Kronenfeld, "Graefenberg Medical Institute," *The Alabama Journal of the Medical Sciences* XVI (October, 1979), 350-52.

[61]Abraham Flexner, *Medical Education in the United States and Canada: A Report to the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching* (New York, 1910), 178-79.

A PIONEER ALABAMA DOCTOR'S LEDGER[1]

edited by

Rhoda Coleman Ellison

A ledger kept by a Bibb County doctor in the early days of settlement gives some authentic glimpses into pioneer life in central Alabama. Dr. David R. Boyd[2] of Centreville, Alabama, in the handsome shaded penmanship of the period inscribed his name and the date January 1, 1829, on the first remaining page of a large account book formerly the property of James M. C. Wiley and now labeled Ledger A. Dr. Boyd's first entries are dated September 1828, but several items are carried over subsequently from 1826 and 1827 and one from 1824. Although Ledger A covers the years 1829 and 1830 most fully, it continues some records, especially of collections, into 1834. On the last pages a different and less legible hand makes entries for 1836, the year following Dr. Boyd's early death. Thus these accounts describe, more or less completely, around a decade of medical service in an early Alabama community.

Possibly the beginning of a new book of accounts was inspired by the transfer of much of the town's business district across the Cahaba River to its present hill location in 1829, when the third county court house was built there.[3] At that time seventy-eight lots were laid off around a central court house square, and their sale by the county commissioners continued until 1832. Something of the hopeful and enterprising

[1]This ledger is now the property of Mrs. Louise Meigs Rogan of Centreville, Alabama.

[2]Dr. David R. Boyd (1802-1835) was a native of Surrey County, North Carolina. He was one of the first settlers to become a land-owner in Bibb County. In 1824 in Centreville, he married Theresa Coleman, whose family had emigrated from Edgecomb County, North Carolina. Besides practicing medicine and farming, he represented Bibb in the State Legislature in 1830 and 1831. His home, completed in 1835 and now occupied by his wife's great-granddaughter, Mrs. Howard Cleveland, Jr., is said to be the oldest residence in Centreville.

[3]At the creation of Bibb (then Cahaba) County by the Territorial Legislature in February 1818, the county seat was located at Centreville at the Falls of the Cahaba, built principally on the west bank of the river. In 1823 county commissioners moved it nine miles east to the present Antioch community, but in 1828 other commissioners voted to return it to Centreville at its present site.

spirit of the new town must have entered into young Dr. Boyd's opening of a new ledger on New Year's Day of 1829. Around a century later this book has something to say about pioneer medical practice and the life of both the physician and the settlers he treated in the late 1820's and early 1830's.

The first interest of this volume lies in the remedies that the physician-pharmacist prescribed and furnished. Their range, of course, is quite limited in comparison with modern prescriptions. Many are still familiar in old-fashioned medicine cabinets: calomel, castor oil, Epsom salts, paregoric, blisterplaster, mercurial ointment, digitalis. Yet many others, although often known to the country doctor through most of the nineteenth century, sound quaint today, for example hartshon (ammonia) and "sac. Saturni" (sugar of lead). For elucidation they require a pharmaceutical dictionary or, in many cases, a doctor acquainted with nineteenth century folkways.[4]

A present-day pharmacist on examining the entire list is impressed by the large number of medications that treat stomach disorders. A sampling of the items reveals that, besides Epsom salts and calomel, such cathartics as folio senna, cream of tartar, and Olium Ricini (castor oil) were frequently prescribed. So also were such laxatives as magnesia and such emetics as elixir vitriol, nox vomica, ipecac, and wine antimony. The popularity of Lee's Antibilious Pills was eclipsed only by that of the unidentified Bateman's Drops.

Although digestive troubles head the list, of course other ailments sent the settler to his physician, too. Prescriptions of nitre dulce probably imply kidney infection or blockage, while tincture digitalis suggests heart difficulties. To prevent the common cold, the pioneer doctor ordered gum foetid (the evil-smelling asafetida) to be worn in a small sack around the neck. His favorite remedy for colds was a blisterplaster, but other prescriptions included gum camphor, oil sassafras (an antiseptic for nose and throat), and a cough medicine concocted of tincture musk and opium (laudanum). Oil of cinnamon was thought to be a cure for colic.

[4]Dr. W. J. B. Owings, retired physician, and Joe Owings, pharmacist, both of Brent, Alabama, have been very helpful.

The exigencies of frontier life required Seneca snakeroot nitre for snakebites and also possibly for what was judged to be high blood pressure in a period without instruments for checking pressure. This medication was usually accompanied by a cathartic or paregoric or the popular Bateman's Drops. For malarial fever, so prevalent in this section, sulphate quinine and Peru bark, a cheap substitute for quinine, were available in Dr. Boyd's medical satchel. He administered sudorific drops to cause sweat and febrifuge powder to reduce fever. Wormseed oil, along with a cathartic or emetic, was evidently considered effective in cases of intestinal worms, which, these records show, struck the planter's wife and child as well as his slave. Balsam and nitre made a dressing for wounds and ulcers, and sprains and rheumatism were apparently treated with gum camphor or opodeldoc liniment.

Of all the medical practices common in central Alabama in the early nineteenth century the one that seems most antiquated today is probably venesection, or the letting of blood. It was still prescribed generally in that period for reducing the number of infected blood cells present during various diseases, with the purpose of allowing healthy cells to form in their place. Dr. Boyd performed venesections regularly, although his successor was given more to the art of cupping, probably dry cupping, which required the pressing of a highly heated cup against the skin rather than an incision, as in venesection and wet cupping. Sometimes both methods were used on the same patient. Most often no medication accompanied venesection or cupping, but, when it did, the prescription was often for a cathartic or paregoric, sometimes followed by anodyne drops (for pain). Venesection occasionally preceded the delivery of a baby.

The pioneer doctor, like many of his later nineteenth century successors, performed other services besides those of physician and pharmacist. He occasionally "cleansed teethe" and frequently extracted them, either in his office or on a house call. When necessary, he was a surgeon also. Dr. Boyd amputated two of a slave's fingers and dressed the wounds regularly for ten weeks afterwards. He recorded "reducing a fractured femoris" for one citizen, a process of setting the hip bone probably accomplished by means of splints in those days.

Another settler's son required his skill in setting both bones of his forearm, listed professionally as "radius and ulna." The violence of the period is reflected in the manner of times the doctor was called on to sew and dress wounds, inflicted usually on the settler himself, though sometimes on his son or, more often, his slaves.

The treatment of slaves was no small part of a physician's practice. Dr. Boyd paid thirteen visits to slaves of James B. Clarke during the month of January 1829, for such purposes as performing venesections or administering emetics, cathartics and blisterplasters. All of his five charges on Oliver Cleveland's bill for December 1829 were incurred for slaves. During the first half of 1836, his successor made fourteen calls on the slaves of A. Stoutenborough, one of which is recorded as "visit negro child through rain." Enough accounts include the item "visit negro accouchment" to raise some question about midwifery in the quarters. The term slave never occurs, of course; sometimes the personal name is given, as in "negro Nance" or "negro Sam," but more often the designation is simply "negro" or "boy."

The charges for these medications and services were predictably modest, even if consideration is given to the difference in money values a century and a half ago. They vary from twelve and a half cents for gum foetid to eight dollars for certain accouchments, including one at this fee for a slave. Venesections were usually charged at a dollar and a half. A tooth extraction cost fifty cents in the doctor's office but a dollar if performed on a house call. A "nocta visit" was fifty cents more expensive than a day call, which was usually listed at one dollar without a prescription. Even a "visit and attention for 8 hours" cost Ebenezer Leeth only six dollars. When the doctor was called on to ride his horse to a farm house that was some distance out in the country, fording creeks and possibly also either fording the river or crossing it by ferry, he expected a proportionately higher fee. Yet a round trip of sixteen miles below Centreville at night to the home of Bird Griffin, for whom he sewed up and dressed a wound and dispensed tincture of myrrh, Epsom salts with tincture opium and also one box of Lee's Antibilious Pills, cost this settler only twelve dollars. In 1836 Vardy Johnson's account included the simple entry "To ride 12 miles, $3.00."

Yet, in spite of the modesty of the charges, bills were frequently not paid for months or years, if at all. Times were undoubtedly hard and money scarce in the new settlements in the late 1820's and early 1830's. Cotton receipts were accepted in lieu of cash, although at two cents a pound one settler had to produce a receipt for 820 pounds in 1829. Accounts were usually recorded as "paid by cash or full" or "paid by note in full," and occasionally a bill was erased by a note from another citizen. Considering the high incidence of early death on the frontier, perhaps the number of cases in which the debt was settled by the executor or administrator of the patient's estate should not be surprising. Sometimes obligations were satisfied by services. Jonathan Potts was allowed to pay more than half of his fourteen-dollar bill for medicine and such professional attentions as dressing his wounds "by halling 876 pounds from [to?] Selma at 75 [cents], $6.59 and by storage in Selma, $2.00." What item was hauled and stored is not recorded, but probably cotton en route to market.

Barter was common, and figured especially in delayed payments. John Tucker, who had incurred a bill of sixty-two and a half cents on December 29, 1830, began to meet the obligation on May 21, 1832, "by 1 venison Ham in part, 50¢." Barney Kornegay, whose charges for 1829 and 1830 amounted to $3.50, came to his doctor in 1832 with sixty-two and a half pounds of beef valued at three cents a pound, producing the balance of his debt in cash. Pioneer women were able to make payments in kind, too, sometimes by their own handwork and sometimes by possessions that should have been necessities to them. Mrs. Berry, whose "fractured radius" Dr. Boyd had set, made a partial payment "by 2 pare of socks, $2.00," although she never paid her bill in full. On the other hand, Mrs. Prudence Starling met her obligation of eighteen dollars and a half in full "by one work oxen," a transaction that must have involved a real deprivation to a widow.

Ledger A records the sale of other items besides medicine and professional services. Tobacco was sold regularly along with drugs, priced in 1828 at three pounds for one dollar. Like most other settlers, Dr. Boyd was also engaged in farming some of the new land that had been opened for sale by the government only a decade earlier, and occasionally he listed

items of his produce, some of which suggest a greater diversification in agriculture than was common later in central Alabama. In September 1829 Dr. Boyd sold to John Henry, Sr.,[5] two bushels of corn at seventy-five cents a bushel and four bushels of wheat at one dollar a bushel, receiving in part payment four pounds of wool at fifty cents a pound. On Henry Potts' bill in 1830, between charges for green camphor and a cathartic there are listed three and a half bushels of seed oats at one dollar and seventy-five cents and two bushels of seed potatoes at one dollar. The versatile doctor was also enterprising enough to own a blacksmith shop, as his charges frequently indicate. He had other means of turning a penny, too. He had a load of cotton hauled for one of his patients at the fee of one dollar, and he charged another for the use of a stable at five dollars. To one patient he sold law books, possibly received earlier in lieu of cash, and to another a saddle. Still another citizen, apparently malarial, he took into his home for two days' board at one dollar a day, while he was treating him with Peru bark and quinine.

All of these early settlers, physician and patients alike, were in a struggle to survive and prosper in the difficult conditions of the central Alabama frontier. The physician was regarded as one of the means of survival, as he diagnosed illnesses and dispensed prescriptions now mostly outdated. This volume of precisely written entries is ample evidence of the dependence of the community upon him. It also permits some glimpses into the life of both patients and physician. It records not only the old-fashioned medicines and treatments relied on but, by implication, the physical ailments most commonly recognized. In this central Alabama country, where both planters and yeoman farmers settled, the record affirms the medical care that slaveholders ordered for their servants and suggests the frugality or lack of funds responsible for small farmers' barter payments. The young doctor's own struggle to survive financially and perhaps even to make his fortune is underlined by his attempts to manage both his practice and his new farming land, and also to sell, buy or barter as circumstances allowed. The period of settlement gains color and

[5]John Henry, Sr., was county sheriff in the early 1820's and local tavern-keeper for many years. The present Kennedy residence just off the court house square was built for him in 1837.

human interest from the record he left in this old leather-bound ledger.

MOBILE'S GREAT HURRICANE OF 1819

by

Jack D.L. Holmes*

On Tuesday afternoon, July 27, 1819, "a small but intense" hurricane struck Mobile Bay.[1] These tropical cyclones in the Gulf of Mexico take their name, "hurricane," from the Mayan Indian god of the storm, "Hunraken." They are caused by the tempestuous clash of air from the tropic and temperate zones, and some hurricanes have affected an area as large as 200,000 square miles. Considered by meteorologists as one of the most awesome natural enemies of mankind, hurricanes generate an over-all destructive force many times that of the area-limited tornado.[2]

The history of hurricanes at Mobile goes back at least to 1717 when Dauphin Island was split into two parts. The eastern part retained the name Dauphin Island, while the western section resumed the original name of the whole island, Massacre.[3] Again, on 11 September 1722 "the force of a great

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[1]This author was first interested in the subject by the account in Jay Robert Nash, *Darkest Hours* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1976), 375-376. In an otherwise-reliable volume on hurricanes, Ivan Ray Tannehill, *Hurricanes Their Nature and History, Particularly those of the West Indies and the Southern Coasts of the United States* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1938), 232, states that the storm "hit Louisiana and Alabama" on August 25-28, 1819.

[2]The general description of hurricanes as tropical cyclones is contained in *ibid.*, 2-3. With air speeds in excess of 200 miles per hour, a single hurricane can generate more energy than that produced throughout the U.S. for several decades according to scientists estimates: 3.6 *BILLION* tons of air moving at speeds over 200 m.p.h. Fred Bayles, "Hurricanes — Important New Info Emerging," Birmingham *News,* 9 October 1977, 28-A. This article reports on "Project Stormfury," which is studying better methods of forecasting hurricanes by means of specially-computer-equipped Navy Orion and Air Force C-130 aircraft. The group is managed by Dr. Robert Sheets, Chief of the Hurricane Group for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

[3]Jack D.L. Holmes, "Dauphin Island in the Franco-Spanish War, 1719-1722," *Frenchmen and French Ways in the Mississippi Valley,* John Francis McDermott, ed. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1969), 103.

southeast wind" destroyed the store and damaged the contents for the Company of the Indies at Mobile.[4] Mobile also suffered during the American Revolution from three years of hurricanes, particularly the series of three in 1780, which are called, collectively, "The Great Hurricane."[5]

So, too, with the 1819 hurricane, we note that its havoc extended along the Alabama and Mississippi coasts.[6] Fortunately for historians, we have two excellent contemporary accounts which are the basic primary sources, plus several newspaper accounts. Dr. Ayers P. Merrill was a military surgeon with a party of U.S. troops under Captain Nathaniel Young.[7] The detachment was part of a larger force of Americans sent to construct a military road from middle Tennessee to New Orleans and were bivouaced in their tents some forty miles north of Bay St. Louis. Dr. Merrill was knocked to the ground by a falling tree and almost fatally wounded, but he joined the other men as they struggled through hurricane-tossed debris and flooded lowlands to the coast. His description of the hurricane is particularly valuable since he saw the destruction inland as well as on the coast.[8]

Another first-person account of the hurricane was provided by J.C. Moret in a survey of hurricanes on the Gulf which he sent to the noted nineteenth-century Mississippi

[4]"The Great Storm of 1722 at Fort Louis, Mobile," translated by Heloise H. Cruzat, *Louisiana Historical Quarterly,* XIV, No. 4 (October, 1931), 567-568.

[5]"The Three Famous Hurricanes of 1780," in Tannehill, *Hurricanes,* 145-146; David M. Ludlum, *Early American Hurricanes, 1492-1870* (Boston: American Meteorological Society, 1963), 66-73; *The Floridian* (Pensacola), 15 September 1821, quoting from the description of the Barbados hurricane of 1780 first appearing in *Botta's American Revolution* and the *North American Review.*

[6]"Mississippi with a rather short coast line, seventy-five miles, rarely experiences the eye of the hurricane. However, when the storms strike the coast of Alabama and Louisiana, high tides and winds of hurricane force also affect the Mississippi Gulf Coast." Arthell Kelley, "The Geography," *A History of Mississippi,* ed. R.A. McLemore (Hattiesburg: University and College Press of Mississippi, 1973), I, 12.

[7]Francis B. Heitman, *The Historical Register and Dictionary of the U.S. Army* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1903), I, 705. Born and enlisted in Massachusetts, Dr. A.P. Merrill was a Surgeon's Mate in the 8th Infantry Regiment from 19 March 1819; Assistant Surgeon on 1 June 1821; and resigned from the service 21 September 1823. Nathaniel Young was a native of Pennsylvania who was promoted to Captain January 1, 1819. *Ibid,* I, 1067.

[8]A.P. Merrill, M.D., "The Hurricane of 1819," *DeBow's Review,* After War Series, V (September, 1868), 789-791.

historian, John F.H. Claiborne. Moret came to the Gulf Coast as early as 1817 and settled at Shieldsborough, "then the only sizable community at Bay St. Louis." Ludlum writes about his experience "as skipper of coastal vessels," which gives credence to his account of "all the storms, big and little, that had visited the area for half a century."[9] His account appears in the same issue of *DeBow's Review* as that of Dr. Merrill.[10]

Moret wrote about the 1819 hurricane that "notwithstanding other statements, [it] was by far the most severe and the strongest that ever blew on this coast since I came to it."[11] We also have contemporary newspaper accounts of the storm. "The Late Hurricane," an item appearing in the New Orleans *Gazette* of 4 August 1819, was eagerly reprinted in other area newspapers: the *Louisiana Courier*[12] and the *Mississippi State Gazette*[13] had virtually the same account based on letters from an officer stationed at Bay St. Louis to Commodore Patterson at New Orleans, and deal with the loss of the U.S.S. *Firebrand* while at anchor off Pass Christian.[14]

Moret described the path of the 1819 hurricane as follows: "That storm began during the night of the twenty-seventh of July, blowing first from the east, and after day-light increasing continually; at about 8 o'clock, A.M. veered to E.S.E. and latter [*sic*] to N.E. until about 11 or 12 o'clock at night, when it suddenly died away to a perfect calm for about ten minutes, then as suddenly sprang up from S.W. and for about an hour blew twice as hard as it had blown from any other points."[15] The so-called "eye of the storm" lasted for fifteen minutes, after which the winds picked up suddenly from the southwest, blowing very hard for about 30 minutes, and subsided gradually, so that by 12 o'clock at night there was no wind from any

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[9]Ludlum, *Early American Hurricanes,* 136.

[10]J.C. Moret to John F.H. Clairborne, published as "Art. III: Storms on the Sea Coast of the Mississippi," *DeBow's Review,* After War Series, V (September, 1868), 791-796.

[11]*Ibid.,* 792. .

[12]*Louisiana Courier* (New Orleans), 4 August 1819.

[13]*Mississippi State Gazette* (Natchez), 14 August 1819.

[14]"The Late Hurricane," New Orleans *Gazette,* 4 August 1819, cited in Ludlum, *Early American Hurricanes,* 138

[15]Moret, "Storms on the Seacoast," 793.

quarter."[16]

Ludlum, an authority on early American hurricanes, after consulting the various accounts of the 1819 storm, gave the following assessment:

> The wind behavior at the mouth of the Mississippi, veering from northeast to south-southeast, would seem to place the landfall just westward of the lower Delta. Moret's mention of a calm at Bay St. Louis indicated a passage over the mainland near that point. A track trending north-northeast over the lower delta, crossing St. Bernard parish, and over Mississippi Sound can be deduced from our meager reports. New Orleans remained well to the west and suffered little damage, but Mobile and probably Pensacola felt the full lash of the easterly and southeasterly blasts in the eastern sector of the storm.[17]

A contemporary newspaper reported that "The whole coast from Rigoulets to Mobile, to which later place only our intelligence reaches, is a scene of desolation, covered with fragments of vessels and houses, the bodies of human beings, and the carcasses of cattle."[18] Dr. Merrill's graphic description tells us even more:

> . . . the heavy rains uniting with the waters of the

[16]*Ibid.* The eerie effects of the eye of the storm on people are described by William Dunbar, an early scientist from Mississippi and Louisiana, who was in New Orleans when the 1779 hurricane struck. He described the lull as follows: "it continued blowing from the East or S.E. for two or three hours with undescribable impetuosity, after which succeeded all at once a most profound and awful calm, so inconceivably terrific that the stoutest heart stood appaled and could not look upon it without feeling a secret horror, as if nature were preparing to resolve herself again into chaos. The body became totally unelastic and a disposition was felt to abandon one self prostrate upon the ground as if despair alone at that moment, could find abode in the human mind, entirely divested of all energy." William Dunbar, "Meteorological Observations Made by William Dunbar, Esq. at the Forest, four miles east of the R. Mississippi . . . for the Year 1800 . . . With Remarks on the State of Winds, Weather, Vegetation, &c. . . . ." *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society,* VI, (1809), 53.

[17]Ludlum, *Early American Hurricanes,* 138.

[18]*New Orleans Courier for the Country,* 4 August 1819, cited in *ibid.,* 137. *Cf.* "The Late Hurricane," Natchez *Mississippi Gazette,* 14 August 1819.

> sea, driven by the winds into every branch and bayou and submerging all the low lands . . . and the sea spray was noticed for more than 50 miles from the coast . . . From Pensacola to New Orleans every vessel was driven from the sea. Some few were saved by being run into the small streams and bays, but the larger portion were lost. Many were wrecked by the fury of the winds and sunk, not a few were stranded upon the coast and the island shores, and several were driven up into the pine forests and there stood for many years high and dry as mournful monuments of the storm. The loss of life was very great, few if any having escaped from the wrecked vessels. . . .[19]

Dr. Merrill continued with a rather macabre relation:

"The shores of Biloxi, Pass Christian, Bay St. Louis, etc., were overflowed by the rise of the sea, and when the waters subsided, numerous dead bodies of men, women and children were taken up from the beach and buried by the inhabitants. Many of these were never identified, but in some cases a ring, a bracelet or some natural mark upon the person enabled the charitable rescuers to give assurance to distant friends, of the fate of lost kindred."[20]

We are apprised of the extent of damage north of the Gulf shore by the same witness, who was almost killed when a tree was blown over and almost snuffed out his life. Dr. Merrill was a member of the party of some 150 U.S. troops encamped in tents upon a small stream or bayou about forty miles north of Bay St. Louis, which seemed to be the target of the killer-storm. The advent of the hurricane is detailed in Dr. Merrill's report:

> The early part of the day was cloudy, and although there was little wind felt by this command in the valley when [*sic*] it was emcamped and surrounded by the pine forest, it was evident from the rapid motion of the clouds that strong currents of air were passing

[19]Merrill, "Hurricane of 1819," 790-791. According to Nash, *Darkest Hours*, 748, the loss of life was 200, including 75 from one ship alone, *The Firebrand*.

[20]Merrill, "Hurricane of 1819," 790-791.

> from the southeast to northwest during the day. At night there was a strong breeze through the camp, increasing gradually in force and attended by pretty copious rain. About 8 o'clock P.M., it amounted to a gale, and the tents of both officers and soldiers were swept away. This gale continued during the night, prostrating the forest trees, driving the soldiers before it, some of them to a great distance, killing one and wounded about 20 others, some of them severely.

Mentioning his own experience, Dr. Merrill wrote, "Among the latter was Surgeon Merrill, who was was [*sic*] prostrated by a falling tree and so seriously injured that his life was for a while despaired of.[21]

As swiftly as the hurricane roared through the camp, it appeared to abate. The contrast was great, and Dr. Merrill told of how the troops struggled through the mess to the coast:

> In the morning the wind had so far abated that scattered soldiers were enabled to return to the camp, coming in one by one during the whole day. A large portion of the surrounding forest had been prostrated to the ground, and although here and there might be seen a sturdy pine standing, not one had escaped the loss of most of its branches from the violence of the storm. Large numbers of sea-birds, including every variety to be found upon the gulf coast, had been driven to this distance from the sea, and many of them much further. Some had escaped unharmed, and being exhausted and alarmed, could be approached and handled as the tamest domestic animals. But many of them, perhaps the larger number, were seriously injured and mutilated, by having been driven violently against the trees. Some were hobbling on one leg, some essaying to fly with one wing, and many were actually dead. Few of them, indeed, lived to return to their favorite haunts.[22]

The troops picked up their few remaining possessions and

[21]*Ibid.*

[22]*Ibid.*, 789-790.

struggled through the floods and debris toward the coast. Everywhere they discovered desolation, but as they approached the Gulf, the destruction wrought by the winds increased. "The roads were obstructed by fallen timber," Dr. Merrill wrote, "so that it was with extreme difficulty that a horseman found his way." Moreover, as if to increase the trials, torrential rains combined with the wind-tossed waves from the gulf thus flooding the streams in the area. "All the streams leading to the sea," Dr. Merrill said, "were in this way changed [charged?] with salt water, and the sea spray was noticed for more than 50 miles from the coast."[23]

Nash, in his account of the hurricane, mistakenly reports that the U.S.S. *Firebrand* was among the many vessels wrecked at Mobile.[24] Actually, the *Firebrand* was far to west when it was sunk by the storm. Nash is graphic, however, when he describes the progress of the storm through Mobile Bay:

> A small but intense hurricane struck Mobile . . . veering from east-southeast to northeast, destroying scores of houses and commercial buildings in Mobile and adjoining towns . . . Though its radius was small, the hurricane that lashed Mobile Bay, beginning about 8:00 P.M. on July 27, 1819, was one of the most savage to strike the American coast in the nineteenth century. . . . For about four hours the hurricane raced up the bay and through Mobile, which acted as a funnel for its brutal winds. The eye of the hurricane passed over the area at midnight, and then the wind increased from the southwest. . . .[25]

Ludlum thinks that Mobile endured the brunt of the storm:

> The Mobile Bay area suffered more seriously than the Mississippi River section since the center of the storm apparently passed over Bay St. Louis and this would put all of the Alabama and West Florida coast in the dangerous eastern semi-circle of the storm. Turtles and alligators were washed up into

[23] *Ibid.*, 790.

[24] Nash, *Darkest Hours*, 748. See the account below.

[25] *Ibid.*, 375.

> the streets of Mobile at the height of the blow and a large brig stranded on Dauphin Street, just east of Water Street. The tide was thought to have been nearly as high as in the great storm and high water of August 1852.[26]

The most serious damage was undoubtedly experienced along the Mississippi coast. The schooner *Thomas Shields* capsized at Bay St. Louis with all hands presumed lost. Most of the houses at the bay were either blown away or "seriously damaged." Curiously, the loss of life was either nonexistant or minimal.[27]

While most coasting vessels made harbor in Bay St. Louis and escaped serious damage, the schooner *Favorite,* captain Michel Eldridge, was driven on the eastern point known as Henderson's Point, where she remained for a considerable length of time. "Several other vessels," the story ran, "were entirely lost at different places along the coast."[28] Moret continued his account of the destruction:

> Several coasting schooners ran in the Bay of St. Louis in the "Portage," a deep cover, in the Eastern shore of the Bay of St. Louis, and there rode out the storm at anchor without any accident. The schooner "Washington," a vessel of about 80 or 100 tons, had anchored, during the night the gale began, outside of the Bay of St. Louis towards Pass Christian. She remained at her anchorage until about 9 o'clock, A.M., where she began to drag her anchors, with the wind at East, and had nearly reached the Western shore of the Bay St. Louis when the wind suddenly wearing [*sic*] to the N.E., she was driven, still dragging her anchors, along the shore within about 150 yards of the land, until she came to a bed in the coast, where General E.W. Ripley, had a military encampment; there her anchors, held her until night, at which time she was last seen on water. The next morning she was found bottom upwards, with her bows open from

[26]Ludlum, *Early American Hurricanes,* 137.
[27]"The Late Hurricane," Natchez *Mississippi State Gazette,* 14 August 1819.
[28]Moret, "Storms on the Seacoast," 793.

her deck to her keel, lying about 50 to 60 yards from the water, on the beach, over which she had been driven until stopped by the trees, at a place near where the house of James Philips now stands. Every person on board perished; some of the dead bodies were found lying from four to five hundred yards in the woods where they had been carried by the waves; no one escaped, and from the number of bodies found, it was supposed that there must have been about twenty persons on board.[29]

The most serious damage to ships occurred with the U.S. Man-of-War Schooner *Firebrand.* This ship, with burthen of 150 tons, equipped with twelve guns, and drawing about 11-12 feet of water, was known to have a crew of between 75 and 80 men. The commander, Lieutenant Cunningham, experienced one of those ironies of history and a fortunate absence from his ship when the hurricane struck. About three days before the storm, he had moved in a shore craft with six men and a cockswain for New Orleans, where he watched the hurricane. He and his men were the only crew members of the *Firebrand* who escaped destruction.

No one could tell what took place on board after Lieutenant Cunningham left the ship. She was seen the morning of the 29th of July, after the gale had subsided, capsized, bottom upwards, lying on "the square Handkerchief," a shoal of sand between the Mississippi and Louisiana shores, off the west end of Cat Island.[30] "How and when she came there," wrote Moret, "no one ever knew; the greater number of her crew were supposed to have been confined in her hull, as she lay with her bottom upward and for a considerable length of time emitted great stench, and but few of the bodies were found; some on the Western end of Cat Island, others on the shore of Bay St. Louis, and one or two, on the shore west of Pass Christian. . . ."[31]

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[29]*Ibid.*

[30]*Ibid.*

[31]*Ibid.*, 792-793. "The Late Hurricane," Natchez *Mississippi State Gazette,* 14 August 1819, reported on the incident: "There were 45 persons on board at the time, all of whom are supposed to have perished . . . and the dead bodies were driving ashore by the waves. The officers on board were Lieutenant GRAY, Doctor

Winds and waves toppled scores of buildings at Bay St. Louis and Pass Christian. Water reached six feet deep as it sloshed through Bay St. Louis and undermined the cottages. One witness could count only three buildings still standing at Pass Christian.[32] Loss of livestock was great. But some vessels escaped damage, as noted in Moret's experience:

> On the night of the twenty-seventh of July, 1819, I was on board of a schooner named the "Peacock of Pearl River," lying in company with another schooner, "The Odd of Pear River," among the Malheureux Island, near the south-shore of the Lake Borgne, to the eastward of the place where the terminus of the Mexian [*sic* for Mexican] Gulf Railroad from New Orleans, has since been established. About 8 o'clock A.M., finding that the wind was still increasing and had wore to E.S.E., we got under weight [*sic*] by hoisting a piece of one of our sails, and ran into Pearl River, and there rode the balance of the gail at anchor in safety.[33]

The people in the area of New Orleans shared a common belief that the storm would do them much damage. On August 6, however, they could read in their newspaper, "with great pleasure we inform our readers that the damage has been less at the Balize than we first felt must have occurred." There was little damage to shipping there, and even less in the city.[34] Although the eye of the hurricane did not pass through New Orleans, there was some damage to ships at the Balize. The *Mary Ann,* which had carried news of the Latin American revolts against Spanish dominion from Venezuela via St. Thomas

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WARDLE, and messrs. PERKINS and ADAMS, midshipmen . . . at the Pass, also, only three houses were left standing: no lives, however, were lost . . . Schooner Hokee and a sloop, supposed to be the James, Daily, master, ashore at the pass of Christian."

[32]New Orleans, "Courier for the Country," 4 August 1819, cited in Nash, *Darkest Hours,* 375 and Ludlum, *Early American Hurricanes,* 137.

[33]Moret, "Storms on the Seacoast," 793.

[34]New Orleans *Courrier de la Louisiana,* 25 and 6 August 1819. There is no mention of the storm in Isaac Monroe Cline, *Storms, Floods and Sunshine* (New Orleans: Pelican, 1945); and Ludlum, *Early American Hurricanes,* 138, states, "New Orleans remained well to the west and suffered little damage."

to Baltimore,[35] was guided by Captain Selby to the Balize anchorage on July 28, 1819. She lost her anchors and cables during the storm. The *Sally-Dana,* another brig, under the command of Captain Todd, was driven close to shore, but by August 2nd, she had been repaired and was ready to set sail. One unidentified vessel tried to run before the storm, but lost its masts and spars as it was dashed to pieces on the shore.[36]

The *Mississippi Gazette* reported that "The hurricane . . . was sensibly felt in New Orleans, but occasioned no serious damage in its vicinity or in the city itself. Its progress appears to have been in an easterly direction through the Gulph of Mexico, from which quarter and from the Atlantic sea board, we await with painful anxiety intelligence of a most disastrous nature."[37] But the next day, the schooner *Flying Fish,* bound from Campeche, crossed the bar with good news for the area's citizens, which was promptly printed: "We are happy to learn," stated the *Gazette,* that much less damage was suffered at the Balize than might have been anticipated from the hurricane — The light house lost nothing but the scaffolding, which surrounded it, and which was blown down. The only vessels damaged, were the brigs Mary Ann and Sally Dana, and a ship outward bound, which lost their masts, and are ashore. . . ."[38]

Moret believed that with the two hurricanes of 1819 and 1821 "a greater extent of the bank along the whole coast was washed away than has been by all the storms that have taken place since."[39] Still, the people of the Gulf Coast, and especially those in Mobile, had reason to praise their good fortune. Although they had faced the most severe damage along the coast, they had reason to thank the fates they had been spared. They had survived a small, but intense hurricane. In the bayous of Barataria below New Orleans, Jean Lafitte and his pirate friends had special reason to rejoice: The *Firebrand* and other ships were sent by the United States to apprehend the Gulf pirate. Now they were with Davy Jones!

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[35]New Orleans *Courrier de la Louisiana,* 25 August 1819.

[36]*Ibid.,* 6 August 1819.

[37]New Orleans *Louisiana Gazette,* 4 August 1819, as quoted in Ludlum, *Early American Hurricanes,* 137.

[38]Natchez *Mississippi Gazette,* 14 August 1819.

[39]Moret, "Storms on the Seacoast," 794.

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